

**WAR AND SOCIETY
IN MEDIEVAL NORFOLK:
The Warrior Gentry, c. 1350-c. 1430**

by

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for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to investigate - through a regional case study of Norfolk county society between 1350 and 1430 - the dual role played by the warrior gentry as soldiers fighting regularly in the king's wars and as shire landowners and office holders, who stood at the forefront of their county community. Chapter One describes the methodology employed in this thesis and places this study in its historiographical context, highlighting the ways in which the majority of county histories have adopted a predominantly political approach to their subject matter, which rarely seeks to reconcile the military and civilian duties of the warrior gentry within and beyond shire borders. Chapter Two outlines the character of Norfolk society between 1350 and 1430, revealing it to be a comparatively wealthy and cohesive county community. Chapter Three homes in directly upon the warrior gentry of the shire, demonstrating the dual role played by the military elite firstly as landlords, politicians and local office holders, and secondly as soldiers with chivalric reputations to maintain. Chapter Four reveals the influence of lordship over Norfolk gentry society - not in a political sense - but chiefly in terms of the widespread contacts, offices, patronage and rewards accrued by the knightly elite in the service of the numerous magnates who held estates in the county. Chapter Four ends by showing the nobility's important role as the major military recruiters in the region. Chapter Five focuses specifically upon the military records of the region's gentry, demonstrating that war was a gamble, but that most of Norfolk's knightly elite, as well as considerable numbers of sub-knightly men-at-arms, were prepared to participate at least occasionally. Chapter Six pulls together the strands from each of the preceding chapters to argue that the cultural values of chivalry - stressing personal and family honour - engendered amongst Norfolk's warrior elite a sense of cultural community and accounts for their desire to serve their sovereign in his overseas military enterprises. It suggests that it was the common ideology of chivalry that cut across the social and economic boundaries of the county community and allowed the East Anglian warrior gentry to form a vibrant, though ill-defined, regional military community, in which social rank played second fiddle to military prowess. Finally, Chapter Seven rounds off this study by demonstrating the ways in which the above solidarities were undermined after c. 1430, in an era when the tide of the Hundred Years War turned against the English, when the military participation of Norfolk's gentry declined, and when,

simultaneously, the county became wracked by political instability in what has popularly become known as the 'Paston Age'.

This thesis has found that Norfolk's warrior gentry were highly active participants in the wars of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. They served extensively on royal and ducal campaigns in France, Scotland, Ireland and Spain, and some even fought in the German states and the Holy Land on their own account. Several of the shire's most militarily-active soldiers were full-time professionals, seeking to live from the wages and profits of warfare. The majority of the knightly elite, however, were regular, though intermittent, participants in these conflicts. Such men possessed significant personal wealth and interspersed their bouts of military service abroad with their daily duties as landlords and shire officials back at home. For men of this ilk, their military service was less a matter of financial gain and more a necessary fillip to their personal and family honour. Although some of these experienced warriors served under numerous commanders over the course of their long careers in arms, many others saw much of their military service under the banner of one or two magnates. These magnates looked to Norfolk's populous gentry warrior class as a source of military support, and a number of the county's knights and esquires carved out long and profitable careers for themselves serving a particular lord in war and peace over an extended time period. Pecuniary advantage aside, it was the influence of the chivalric ethos over the East Anglian gentry - especially marked between 1350 and 1430 in light of England's numerous battlefield triumphs - that provided Norfolk's warrior gentry with a common ideology that cut across social boundaries, heightened their martial inclinations, and connected them culturally with their fellow warriors across the eastern counties. The vibrant military community that evolved between the reigns of Edward III and Henry V, however, was rapidly undermined after 1430 as Norfolk county society increasingly became politically unstable, and as the English simultaneously lost almost all of their French territory. War had always been a gamble, but after 1430 it looked increasingly unlikely to pay off. Moreover, from 1453 there were no more opportunities for Norfolk's young warrior gentry to see military service, except in the civil conflicts of the Wars of the Roses, or by undertaking garrison duty at Calais, England's last remaining French outpost. As such, the knightly elite increasingly became detached from the harsh reality of chivalrous warfare and focused instead upon the spectacle and pageantry of

chivalric culture, celebrated in literature, architecture, feasts, parades and tournaments. Military service was the *raison d'être* of the warrior gentry and without it East Anglia's military community could not maintain its former cohesion.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <i>BIHR</i> | <i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i> |
| <i>BJRL</i> | <i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i> |
| <i>BL</i> | British Library |
| <i>BPReg</i> | <i>Register of Edward, the Black Prince</i> , ed. M. C. B. Dawes, iv (London, 1933). |
| <i>CAD</i> | <i>A Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Deeds...</i> |
| <i>CChR</i> | <i>Calendar of the Charter Rolls</i> |
| <i>CCR</i> | <i>Calendar of the Close Rolls</i> |
| <i>CFR</i> | <i>Calendar of the Fine Rolls</i> |
| <i>CIM</i> | <i>Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous</i> |
| <i>CIPM</i> | <i>Calendar of the Inquisitions Post Mortem</i> |
| <i>CP</i> | Cockayne, G. E., <i>The Complete Peerage</i> , ed. H. V. Gibbs <i>et al.</i> , 13 vols. (London, 1910-59). |
| <i>CPR</i> | <i>Calendar of the Patent Rolls</i> |
| <i>DKR</i> | <i>Reports of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records</i> |
| <i>EcHR</i> | <i>Economic History Review</i> |
| <i>EHR</i> | <i>English Historical Review</i> |
| Blomefield, <i>History of Norfolk</i> | Blomefield, F., <i>An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk</i> , 11 vols. (London, 1805-10). |
| <i>Foedera</i> | <i>Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae etc.</i> , ed. T. Rymer, rev. A. Clarke <i>et al.</i> , four volumes in seven parts (London, 1816-69). |
| <i>FP</i> | <i>The Fastolf Papers</i> |
| <i>House of Commons, 1386-1421</i> | <i>The History of Parliament. The House of Commons, 1386-1421</i> , eds. J. S. Roskell, L. Clark, and C. Rawcliffe, 4 vols. (Stroud, 1992). |
| <i>JCAS</i> | <i>Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society</i> |
| <i>JGReg (1372-76)</i> | <i>John of Gaunt's Register 1372-76</i> , ed. S. Armitage-Smith (London, Camden Soc., 3rd Series, xx-xxi, 1911). |

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|-------------------------------|---|
| <i>JGReg (1379-83)</i> | <i>John of Gaunt's Register 1379-83</i> , ed. E. C. Lodge and R. Somerville, 2 vols. (London, Camden Soc., 3rd Series, lvi-lvii, 1937). |
| <i>NRO</i> | <i>Norfolk Record Office</i> |
| <i>ODNB</i> | <i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: in association with the British Academy: from the earliest times to the year 2000</i> , eds. H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison, 60 vols. (Oxford, 2004). |
| <i>PCM</i> | <i>Processus in Curia Marescalli</i> , 2 vols. |
| <i>PL</i> , ed. Davis | <i>Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century</i> , ed. N. Davis, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1971-6). |
| <i>PL</i> , ed. Gairdner | <i>The Paston Letters</i> , ed. J. Gairdner, 6 vols. (London, 1904). |
| <i>Reg. Chichele</i> | <i>The Register of Henry Chichele, archbishop of Canterbury, 1414-1443</i> , ed. E. F. Jacob, 4 vols. (Oxford: Canterbury and York Society, 1938-47). |
| <i>R.S.</i> | The Rolls Series |
| <i>TNA</i> | The National Archives |
| <i>TRHS</i> | <i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i> |
| <i>VCH Cambridgeshire</i> | <i>The Victoria County History of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely</i> , ed. L. F. Saltzman (Oxford, 1938-2002). |
| <i>VCH Norfolk</i> | <i>The Victoria History of the County of Norfolk</i> , ed. W. Page, ii (London, 1906). |
| <i>Worcester, Boke</i> | Worcester, William, <i>The Boke of Noblesse, addressed to King Edward the Fourth on his Invasion of France in 1475</i> , ed. J. G. Nichols (London, 1860). |
| <i>Worcester, Itineraries</i> | <i>William Worcestre: Itineraries</i> , ed. J. H. Harvey (Oxford, 1969). |

PREFACE

There are few studies of the English gentry's participation in the Hundred Years War and its sister conflicts written from a regional perspective. The majority of works on these wars are nationally-focused, in so far as those involved are considered purely in their guise as Englishmen fighting abroad on behalf of their king. Certainly there is nothing in English historiography to match Philippe Contamine's sweeping analysis of war and society in later medieval France.¹ Nor is there a body of scholarship for England - maintaining a military inflection - to match the numerous studies of French duchies and counties during this violent age.² Nonetheless, historians of English war and society have collectively uncovered considerable information regarding the size, strength and cost of royal and ducal armies, have examined the recruitment process by which these armies were constructed, and have investigated the minutiae of campaigns at various key moments and in different theatres.³ Where regional studies of English 'military communities' have been undertaken, attention has predominantly focused upon the north and west of the

¹ P. Contamine, *Guerre, état et société à la fin du Moyen Age. Etudes sur les armées des rois de France, 1337-1494* (Paris, 1972).

² See Chapter One.

³ K. B. McFarlane, 'War, Economy and Social Change: England and the Hundred Years War', *England in the Fifteenth Century: Collected Essays of K. B. McFarlane*, ed. and intro. G. L. Harriss (London, 1981), pp. 139-49; K. B. McFarlane, 'A Business-Partnership in War and Administration 1421-1445', *England in the Fifteenth Century: Collected Essays of K. B. McFarlane*, ed. and intro. G. L. Harriss (London, 1981), pp. 151-74; M. H. Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, 1984); M. H. Keen, *Nobles, Knights and Men-At-Arms in the Middle Ages* (London, 1996); M. H. Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman: Heraldry, Chivalry and Gentility in Medieval England, c.1300-c.1500* (Stroud, 2002); C. T. Allmand, *Lancastrian Normandy 1415-1450: The History of a Medieval Occupation* (Oxford, 1983); M. Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience* (London, 1996); A. Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses. Military Service and the English Aristocracy under Edward III* (Woodbridge, 1994); A. Ayton, 'War and the English Gentry under Edward III', *History Today*, xlii (1992), 34-40; A. Ayton, 'Edward III and the English Aristocracy at the Beginning of the Hundred Years War', *Armies, Chivalry and Warfare in Medieval Britain and France: Harlaxton Medieval Studies VII*, ed. M. Strickland (Stamford, 1998), pp. 173-206; A. Curry, 'Military Organisation in Lancastrian Normandy, 1422-50' (D.Phil., Council for National Academic Awards, 1985); A. Curry, 'The First English Standing Army? Military Organisation in Lancastrian Normandy, 1420-1450', *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England*, ed. C. D. Ross (Gloucester, 1979), pp. 193-214; A. Curry, 'English Armies in the Fifteenth Century', *Arms, Armies and Fortifications in the Hundred Years War*, ed. A. Curry and M. Hughes (Woodbridge, 1994), pp. 39-68.

kingdom, whose gentry lived in comparatively harsh circumstances, harried by their Scottish and Welsh neighbours, and who consequently more readily adopted the profession of arms.⁴ By contrast relatively little has been written about military society, or even individual soldiers, in the more peaceable climes of East Anglia.⁵

This thesis seeks to contribute towards addressing this imbalance by analysing the military careers and martial vocation of the Norfolk gentry, and more broadly investigating the character of East Anglia's military community. The period that has been selected begins in c. 1350, at a time when the triumphs of Crécy and Calais were fresh in the minds of the English people, and ends in c. 1430, the year after the relief of Orleans, after which Lancastrian fortunes in France gradually declined, culminating with the English expulsion from all but Calais in 1453. There are two compelling reasons for choosing Norfolk's gentry as the protagonists in a military case study. Firstly, the survival of the Paston Letters, with their tales of political machination, has naturally drawn scholarly attention towards the post-1430 period

⁴ H. J. Hewitt, *Cheshire under the Three Edwards* (Chester, 1967); A. Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses: Military Activity and English Society, 1452-97* (London, 1981); M. J. Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism: Cheshire and Lancashire Society in the Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Cambridge, 1983); P. Morgan, *War and Society in Medieval Cheshire, 1277-1403* (Manchester, Chetham Society, 3rd series, xxxiv, 1987); A. J. Pollard, *North-East England during the Wars of the Roses* (Oxford, 1990); A. Goodman, 'Introduction', *War and Border Societies in the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Goodman and A. Tuck (London, 1992), pp. 1-29; D. S. Green, 'The Military Personnel of Edward the Black Prince', *Medieval Prosopography*, xxi (2000), 133-52.

⁵ C. E. Johnston, 'Sir William Oldhall', *EHR*, xxv (1910), 715-22; J. S. Roskell, 'Sir William Oldhall, Speaker in the Parliament of 1450-1', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, v (1961), 87-112; E. L. T. John, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham, East Anglian Society and the Dynastic Revolution of 1399', *Norfolk Archaeology*, xxxv (1970-3), 96-108; J. D. Milner, 'Sir Simon Felbrigg KG: The Lancastrian Revolution and Personal Fortune', *Norfolk Archaeology*, xxxvii (1978), 84-91; K. B. McFarlane, 'The Investment of Sir John Fastolf's Profits of War', *England in the Fifteenth Century: Collected Essays of K. B. McFarlane*, intro. G. L. Harriss (London, 1981), pp. 175-97; R. Virgoe, 'The Earlier Knyvetts: The Rise of a Norfolk Gentry Family', *Norfolk Archaeology*, xli (1990), 1-14; M. H. Keen, 'English Military Experience and the Court of Chivalry: The Case of Grey v. Hastings', *Nobles, Knights and Men-At-Arms in the Middle Ages*, ed. M. H. Keen (London, 1996), pp. 167-85; A. Ayton, 'Knights, Esquires and Military Service: The Evidence of the Armorial Cases before the Court of Chivalry', *The Medieval Military Revolution: State, Society and Military Change in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. A. Ayton and J. L. Price (London, 1998), pp. 81-104; D. S. Green, 'Edward the Black Prince and East Anglia: An Unlikely Association', *Fourteenth Century England III*, ed. W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 83-98.

and has meant that much of the scholarship surrounding Norfolk has been essentially non-military in its content, unraveling the workings of so-called ‘bastard feudalism’ at the local level.⁶ Secondly, Norfolk was a shire renowned by contemporaries, and near-contemporaries, for its lawyers and bureaucrats, not for its soldiers, and as such, with the exception of the famous career of Sir John Fastolf, Norfolk’s warrior gentry has been given rather short-shrift by historians. This is perhaps surprising when one considers that the county’s antiquarians and early scholars displayed evident pride in the military contribution to the wars with France - real and imagined - of the region’s knightly elite.⁷

The purpose of this study is not merely to demonstrate that Norfolk’s gentry participated extensively in the Hundred Years War. It has also been undertaken in order to reconcile to some degree, through a local case study, two parallel historiographical traditions - socio-military history and gentry studies - which overlap in regional analyses of later medieval England far less consistently than they ought. The world described by historians of war and society is one in which the English gentry was essentially a military caste, imbued with the values of chivalry, and desirous of bearing arms for the sake of their own reputation and their family’s honour. By contrast, the majority of county histories depict a world strait-jacketed by

⁶ *PL*, ed. Gairdner; *PL*, ed. Davis; *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century (Part III)*, ed. R. Beadle and C. Richmond (Oxford, for the Early English Text Society, 2005). For the socio-political context, see R. Virgoe, ‘The Crown and Local Government: East Anglia under Richard II’, *The Reign of Richard II*, ed. F. R. H. du Boulay and C. M. Barron (London, 1971), pp. 218-41; R. Virgoe, ‘The Crown, Magnates and Local Government in Fifteenth-Century East Anglia’, *The Crown and Local Communities*, ed. J. R. L. Highfield and R. Jeffs (Gloucester, 1981), pp. 72-87; C. Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: The First Phase* (Cambridge, 1990); C. Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: Fastolf’s Will* (Cambridge, 1996); C. Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: Endings* (Manchester, 2000); C. E. Moreton, ‘A Social Gulf? The Upper and Lesser Gentry of Later Medieval England’, *Journal of Medieval History*, xvii (1991), 255-62; P. C. Maddern, ‘“Best Trusted Friends”: Concepts and Practices of Friendship among Fifteenth-Century Norfolk Gentry’, *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1992 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. N. Rogers (Stamford, 1994), pp. 100-17; H. Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster: Public Authority and Private Power, 1399-1461* (Oxford, 2000). For a fuller discussion of the historiography, see Chapter One.

⁷ E.g. Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*; *The Records of the City of Norwich*, ed. W. Hudson and J. C. Tingey, 2 vols. (Norwich, 1906-10); W. Rye, *Norfolk Families* (Norwich, 1913); see also early issues of *Norfolk Archaeology*.

shire borders, in which office-holding, patronage and reward, political disharmony, and the impact of law and order in the localities, are all considered paramount. These are naturally topics worthy of detailed consideration, yet an unintended result of this approach has been that the warrior gentry in these types of studies are unfortunately perceived primarily as landlords and local politicians, with their military vocation largely ignored. Moreover, when such men leave their county to undertake military expeditions abroad, it is the impact of their absence that becomes the central issue, with little consideration given to what these important regional gentry might have experienced whilst away from home.⁸ In the following chapters, therefore, the warrior gentry themselves, rather than the county of Norfolk, will represent our focal point. Perhaps the greatest challenge facing England's militarily-active elite in the later Middle Ages was their need to reconcile their martial vocation with their domestic duties, private and public, in their native shires. The over-arching purpose of this thesis is consequently to underscore this dual role and to perceive the warrior gentry in more rounded fashion, as soldiers who were part of a national (if not international) chivalrous fraternity, but for whom their role in county society represented the other major factor in their daily lives.

The following study is organised into seven chapters, which may be subdivided thematically into three sections. Chapters One and Two are largely introductory. Chapter One introduces the approach adopted in this work, in terms of historiography, methodology, and the limitations of the source materials, while Chapter Two outlines what Norfolk county society was like during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, touching briefly upon the shire's history, topography and economy, but mainly describing the workings of political society between 1350 and 1430. Chapters Three and Four investigate the role of Norfolk's warrior gentry within the domestic world of the shire, analysing the social and chivalric solidarities that prevailed between gentry soldiers, as well as their relations with the civilian gentry of the county, and with the region's resident and non-resident nobility, in whose service many carved out their careers in peace and war. Chapters Five and Six examine respectively the nature and extent of the Norfolk gentry's contribution to royal and ducal wars, and the character of the region's military community, in which broadly

⁸ See Chapter One.

East Anglian martial solidarities prevailed in an era of heightened military activity. Finally, in Chapter Seven, one will turn to the decades after 1430, taking a fresh approach to what is often dubbed the 'Paston Age', by considering the struggle of Norfolk's warrior gentry to maintain their martial values and sense of identity in the face of the rapidly changing world of the later fifteenth century, in which opportunities for war service diminished and the county was wrought by political upheaval and civil war.

INTRODUCTION

The historiography of war and society in later medieval England is highly complex and deeply interwoven with wider studies of the English aristocracy in peacetime. Yet with few exceptions county histories have adopted an overtly political approach to their subject matter, seeking to unravel the intricacies of gentry life in the localities. Rarely can one even discern a military inflection in these types of studies, let alone a detailed focus upon the county's soldiers. In light of this omission, this chapter seeks to explain the purpose behind this thesis as it relates to current historiography, before outlining and justifying the methods adopted and the limitations of the source materials that will be utilised throughout.

The Search For A Broad Synthesis

No work focusing upon gentry society in later medieval England can begin without first recognising the importance of K. B. McFarlane to this particular field of historical research.¹ Prior to McFarlane's appearance on the academic scene, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had received a decidedly bad press from the leading medievalists of earlier generations. The first great modern historian, William Stubbs, writing in the late nineteenth century, had after all described the fifteenth century as "a worn-out helpless age, that calls for pity without sympathy, and yet balances weariness with something like regrets".² Stubbs studied and taught what he labelled 'constitutional history', separate from 'political history' and centred upon "the machinery of government, parliamentary institutions and national law".³ What resulted in the long run was an undue focus upon the Crown and the royal government

¹ For details of McFarlane's publications, see below.

² W. Stubbs, *The Constitutional History of England*, 3 vols., fifth edition (Oxford, 1903), p. 638.

³ C. Carpenter, 'Political and Constitutional History: Before and After McFarlane', *The McFarlane Legacy*, ed. R. H. Britnell and A. J. Pollard (Stroud, 1995), p. 175. Some of Stubbs' more prominent successors of the early twentieth century included T. F. Tout, F. M. Powicke, E. F. Jacob and V. H. Galbraith. *Ibid.*, pp. 179-83; see also P. B. M. Blaas, *Continuity and Anachronism: Parliamentary and Constitutional Developments in Whig Historiography and in the Anti-Whig Reaction between 1890 and 1930* (London, 1978); P. R. H. Slee, *Learning and a Liberal Education: The Study of Modern History at the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Manchester, 1800-1914* (Manchester, 1986).

that served to reinforce Stubbs' belief that the later Middle Ages had witnessed the erosion of royal power by the baronage.⁴

By the time McFarlane entered the academic fray at Oxford during the 1930s the fifteenth century was in desperate need of reappraisal, and his subsequent revision of this period may justifiably be considered his greatest achievement and his most lasting legacy.⁵ Of equal import, McFarlane broke the mould in the way medievalists examined their subject. Strongly influenced by the work of his Oxford colleague, Lewis Namier,⁶ McFarlane's approach essentially sought to meld together the study of institutions with a deeper understanding of politics and the social and cultural forces that influence society. His decision to embrace what would now be termed 'social history' played a key role in guiding scholarly focus away from Stubbsian-based 'constitutional history'.⁷ McFarlane never restrained himself in seeking to draw broad conclusions about fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English society, perceiving that "political, social and constitutional history were not separable subjects".⁸ His research topics were varied, generally national in scope, and constantly searching for a synthesis.⁹ He investigated the role and function of Parliament;¹⁰ surveyed the Wars of the Roses;¹¹ outlined the importance of retaining and patronage between nobles and gentry;¹² and, as an achievement pivotal to this thesis, examined the relationship

⁴ Two of the most important works focusing upon government institutions are T. F. Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History of Mediaeval England*, 6 vols. (Manchester, 1920-33); *Records of the Parliament Holden at Westminster*, ed. F. W. Maitland (London, R.S., 1893); J. G. Edwards, *Historians and the Medieval English Parliament* (Glasgow, 1960), pp. 8-24.

⁵ K. B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England: The Ford Lectures For 1953 and Related Studies* (Oxford, 1973), editor's introduction, p. viii.

⁶ For Namier's career, see L. Colley, *Lewis Namier* (London, 1989).

⁷ Carpenter, 'Before and After McFarlane', pp. 186-93.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁹ 'Introduction', *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, pp. vii-xxxvii; G. L. Harriss, 'Introduction', *England in the Fifteenth Century: Collected Essays of K. B. McFarlane*, ed. and intro. G. L. Harriss (London, 1981), pp. ix-xxvii.

¹⁰ K. B. McFarlane, 'Parliament and 'Bastard Feudalism'', *England in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1981), pp. 1-21.

¹¹ K. B. McFarlane, 'The Wars of the Roses', *England in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1981), pp. 231-61; McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, pp. 177-86.

¹² K. B. McFarlane, 'Bastard Feudalism', *England in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1981), pp. 23-43; McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, pp. 102-21.

between war and aristocratic society.¹³ In the process he irrevocably undermined the long-held belief that social history could be defined negatively as the “history of a people with the politics left out”.¹⁴

Nonetheless, it is to do McFarlane a grave injustice to describe him solely as a scholar of fifteenth-century society. His collected essays, posthumously collated under the misleading title of *England in the Fifteenth Century*, included three articles on the fourteenth century and one on the thirteenth,¹⁵ while his Ford Lecture Series of 1953, published as *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, spanned the significantly longer period from 1290 to 1536. McFarlane principally examined his chosen themes on a nationwide scale, utilising those archives most abundant with information and most readily available.¹⁶ Consequently, despite the undeniable quality of his scholarship, his reliance upon a widespread miscellany of sources can make the reader feel at times that his conclusions are essentially grounded in the use of common sense and educated guesswork, utilising examples found sporadically throughout the realm. For instance, to cite only his foremost Norfolk sources as those pertinent to this thesis, the surviving papers of the litigious Sir John Fastolf,¹⁷ as well as those of his clerk, William Worcester,¹⁸ alongside excerpts from the Paston Letters,¹⁹ are used time and again by McFarlane to support his theories about the nature of fourteenth- and

¹³ K. B. McFarlane, ‘An Indenture of Agreement between Two English Knights for Mutual Aid and Counsel in Peace and War, 5 December, 1298’, *England in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1981), pp. 45-55; McFarlane, ‘War, the Economy and Social Change’, pp. 139-49; McFarlane, ‘A Business-Partnership in War and Administration’, pp. 151-74; McFarlane, ‘The Investment of Sir John Fastolf’s Profits of War’, pp. 175-97; McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, pp. 19-40.

¹⁴ G. M. Trevelyan, *English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries. Chaucer to Queen Victoria* (London, 1942), p. vii.

¹⁵ C. Richmond, ‘Review: After McFarlane’, *History*, lxxviii (1983), 46.

¹⁶ In the general considerations at the beginning of his 1953 Ford Lecture Series, McFarlane explained which archives he had utilised to support his propositions, namely those of John of Gaunt, the Stafford dukes of Buckingham, the Mowbray dukes of Norfolk, Thomas duke of Clarence, the descendants of Edmund Langley duke of York, the de Vere earls of Oxford, the Beauchamps earls of Warwick, the Courtenay earls of Devon, the Lords Bouchier, Ralph Lord Cromwell, Sir John Fastolf, the Dinham of Hartland, the Ferrers of Chartley, and the Staffords of Grafton. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, p. 17.

¹⁷ Oxford: Magdalen College, *FP*.

¹⁸ For Worcester’s writings, see Chapter Seven.

¹⁹ Preface, n. 6.

fifteenth-century gentry and noble life.²⁰ The obvious question one must ask is whether these may be considered typical. Fastolf stands as a fine exemplar of the professional soldier, rising from relative obscurity in Norfolk to the rank of Garter Knight, yet his career in arms was certainly abnormally successful and undoubtedly most knights who fought in France never experienced such rapid promotion.²¹ Worcester, as his famous *Boke of Noblesse* makes plain,²² held his employer in the highest regard and appears largely to have shared his attitudes and ideals on matters social and military, thereby providing no particular contrast to the evidence that may be gleaned from the Fastolf Papers, several of which Worcester himself scribed on his master's behalf.²³ As for the Paston Letters, valuable and largely unique in their survival though they undoubtedly are, numerous scholars have well illustrated that despite the intricate details they supply about Norfolk society, they are nonetheless imbued with personal bias and represent the views of the Pastons and their adherents alone, thereby, when taken in isolation, providing a rather one-eyed depiction of the political situation in Norfolk.²⁴

Detailed analyses of particular localities would naturally have provided much stronger evidence to support McFarlane's thoroughly conceived assertions and it is this path that his successors have largely chosen to follow. In McFarlane's wake a host of scholars have essentially spent the past forty years adopting an experimental approach in applying his views to individual counties and regions.²⁵ In the process,

²⁰ E.g. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, pp. 17, 21, 33-6, 44-5, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56-7, 83, 92, 94, 96, 98, 102, 108, 116-18, 132, 163, 183, 223, 237 [Fastolf]; pp. 36, 44, 56, 146, 184, 196 [Worcester]; pp. 8, 104, 117, 124, 239 [Pastons].

²¹ See esp. Chapters Five and Seven.

²² Worcester, *Boke*.

²³ For Worcester's varied duties in Fastolf's employ, see K. B. McFarlane, 'William Worcester: A Preliminary Survey', *England in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1981), pp. 201-4. See also Chapter Seven for further analysis of the Worcester-Fastolf relationship.

²⁴ For views on the Paston Letters, see, for example, B. P. Wolffe, *Henry VI* (London, 1981), pp. 121-4; Richmond, *The Paston Family: The First Phase*; Richmond, *The Paston Family: Fastolf's Will*; Richmond, *The Paston Family: Endings*; Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 128-55.

²⁵ Published regional studies include: K. S. Naughton, *The Gentry of Bedfordshire in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Leicester, 1976); M. Cherry, 'The Courtenay Earls of Devon: The Formation and Disintegration of a Later Medieval Aristocratic Affinity', *Southern History*, i (1979), 71-99; A. J. Pollard, 'The

naturally enough, the flaws of his thinking, the limitations of his sources, and in some cases the unjustified breadth of his conclusions, have in part been revealed,²⁶ while our understanding of the intricacies of local political society has been immeasurably enhanced. An unfortunate side-effect of this approach, however, has been a failure to draw any sort of nationally accurate synthesis from these insular county studies. Perhaps more importantly, many scholars have focused so intently upon their selected regions as separate geographical entities that the gentry who lived in the area under investigation seem only to exist within the confines of the county in question.²⁷

The difficulty in drawing any kind of synthesis from these impressively in-depth works (or indeed, of speaking in general terms about the character of English gentry society) lies in the fact that so many variables between individual counties and regions have been revealed. This in itself strongly indicates the personalised nature of local government, for although the Crown possessed overarching powers across the realm, ultimately, in an era of comparatively slow communication, the grunt work of regional administration had to be carried out locally.²⁸ In practice, kinship ties and

Richmondshire Community of Gentry during the Wars of the Roses', *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Late Medieval England*, ed. C. D. Ross (Gloucester, 1979), pp. 37-59; Virgoe, 'The Crown, Magnates and Local Government in Fifteenth-Century East Anglia', pp. 72-87; N. Saul, *Knights and Esquires: The Gloucestershire Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1981); Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*; S. M. Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry in the Fifteenth Century* (Chesterfield, Derbyshire Record Society, viii, 1983); I. Rowney, 'Government and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century: Staffordshire 1439-59', *Midland History*, viii (1983), 49-69; Morgan, *War and Society in Medieval Cheshire*; S. Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England: The Greater Gentry of Nottinghamshire* (Oxford, 1991); E. Acheson, *A Gentry Community: Leicestershire in the Fifteenth Century, c. 1422-c. 1485* (Cambridge, 1992); C. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401-1499* (Cambridge, 1992); M. Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk: An Economic and Social History, 1200-1500* (Woodbridge, 2008); C. D. Liddy, *The Bishopric of Durham in the Late Middle Ages: Lordship, Community and the Cult of St Cuthbert* (Woodbridge, 2008).

²⁶ This is not to denigrate the "seminal quality of his insights". Harriss, 'Introduction', *England in the Fifteenth Century*, p. ix.

²⁷ See below.

²⁸ B. H. Putnam, 'The Transformation of the Keepers of the Peace into the Justices of the Peace, 1327-1380', *TRHS*, 4th series, xii (1929), 19-48; A. Harding, 'The Origins and Early History of the Keeper of the Peace', *TRHS*, 5th series, x (1960), 85-109; A. Harding, *The Law Courts of Medieval England* (London, 1973); R. W. Kaeuper, 'Law and Order in Fourteenth-Century England: The Evidence of Special Commissions of Oyer and Terminer', *Speculum*, liv (1979), 734-84; A. Verduyn, 'The Politics of Law

networks of patronage and association regularly dictated the actions of nobles and gentry alike. Regional government was more personal than uniform in character and function, and thus its workings in each region or county represented the governing style of those with local influence, despite the king's nominal claim to supreme authority.²⁹ Viewed positively, scholars have been made increasingly aware of regional diversity and of the unique aspects of the localities upon which they have focused. On the other hand, this wealth of conflicting information has engendered an atmosphere in which one cannot feel entirely comfortable in making generalisations of any kind, because the current state of research has reached the point where evidence exists to refute aspects of any attempted synthesis.³⁰

As recent scholarship has increasingly sought to understand the minutiae of local political society, shire borders have themselves become a sort of immutable barrier, beyond which the majority of county histories rarely traverse.³¹ A sample of

and Order during the Early Years of Edward III', *EHR*, cviii (1993), 842-67; A. Musson and W. M. Ormrod, *The Evolution of English Justice: Law, Politics and Society in the Fourteenth Century* (London, 1998).

²⁹ For relations between the Crown and the localities (c.1350-c.1430), see R. A. Griffiths, *The Reign of Henry VI: The Exercise of Royal Authority, 1422-1461* (London, 1981); *Henry V: The Practice of Kingship*, ed. G. L. Harriss (Oxford, 1985); W. M. Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III: Crown and Political Society in England 1327-1377* (New Haven, 1990), pp. 145-96; S. K. Walker, 'Richard II's Views on Kingship', *Rulers and Ruled in Medieval England*, ed. R. E. Archer and S. K. Walker (London, 1995), pp. 49-64; J. L. Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge, 1996); N. Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven, 1997); Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*.

³⁰ For general works discussing the English gentry, see N. Denholm-Young, *The Country Gentry in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1969); C. Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1987), pp. 69-83; Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*; P. R. Coss, *The Origins of the English Gentry* (Cambridge, 2003); G. L. Harriss, *Shaping the Nation: England, 1360-1461* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 136-86.

³¹ Indeed, McFarlane's heirs have, in recent years, have engaged in a certain amount of introspection regarding the paths that late medieval English social history has taken. Richmond, 'After McFarlane', 46-60; R. Horrox, 'The State of Research: Local and National Politics in Fifteenth-Century England', *Journal of Medieval History*, xviii (1992), 391-403; E. Powell, 'After McFarlane': The Poverty of Patronage and the Case for Constitutional History', *Trade, Devotion and Governance: Papers in Late Medieval History*, ed. D. J. Clayton, R. G. Davies and P. McNiven (Stroud, 1994), pp. 1-16; Carpenter, 'Before and After McFarlane', pp. 175-206; P. R. Coss, 'Hilton, Lordship and the Culture of the Gentry', *Past and Present*, cxcv, Supplement ii (2007), 34-52.

chapter headings from some of the more important of these studies illustrates the point. Typically, chapters will focus upon (1) the incomes of the county's gentry (in order to quantify one's subject matter), (2) magnate-gentry relations (often in the context of patronage and/or the negative effects of livery and maintenance), (3) social mobility, (4) patterns of office holding, (5) lawlessness and arbitration, and (6) intra-gentry social networks (usually characterised by an analysis of kinship/marriage ties).³² In such works, although the gentry are the protagonists, phrased crudely, it is the county itself that is the real star. Relating this directly to the purpose of this thesis, an individual knight or esquire in a county history is usually discussed wholly in the context of his place in that county's society. If he leaves the county for a period of time, he either temporarily disappears from the narrative, or else it is the effect of his absence from the county that is examined.

Between the mid-fourteenth and the mid-fifteenth century absence abroad on military service represented the most substantial drain of the gentry away from their native shires. Especially under Edward III and Henry V the contribution of gentry men-at-arms to the king's wars was extensive and often longstanding.³³ Such soldiers, as McFarlane and others have shown, may have returned home with their financial status considerably altered. They may have earned themselves notable reputations as courageous and chivalrous warriors and, at a service level, they may have cultivated the 'good lordship' of noble military commanders who would have been unlikely to dispense entirely with their services during breaks in hostilities or upon their retirement to the comforts of their home county.³⁴ In an age in which English armies were recruited on a national scale, via contract and by means of personal connection,³⁵ no county would have been without a significant body of military participants. Despite the comings and goings of these warriors, particularly those

³² This sample is taken from the following published county histories: Saul, *Knights and Esquires*; Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*; Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry*; Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England*; Acheson, *A Gentry Community*; Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*.

³³ See Chapter Five.

³⁴ See Chapters Four and Five.

³⁵ For three surviving examples of military subcontracts that followed this pattern, see A. Goodman, 'The Military Subcontracts of Sir Hugh Hastings, 1380', *EHR*, xcvi (1980), 114-20; S. K. Walker, 'Profit and Loss in the Hundred Years War: The Subcontract of Sir John Strother, 1374', *BIHR*, lviii (1985), 100-6; Morgan, *War and Society in Medieval Cheshire*, pp. 149-55.

knights and esquires of formidable wealth and local influence, county histories seem to get along quite well without them, or, more accurately, to perceive them purely in their domestic guise as landowners, as local officials, and as heads of families whose sons and daughters represented good catches on the marriage market.³⁶ This narrow focus does an injustice to these soldiers, as it largely ignores their military vocation altogether, in so doing, simultaneously failing to account for the distinct cultural values of the warrior that were, at least in the fourteenth century, pivotal to knights' and esquires' perceptions of themselves as members of a martial class.³⁷ More importantly, this sort of county-centric view fails to appreciate that a proportion of local men of all ranks had seen a world of bloodshed far beyond their county's borders on the battlefields of France. They had experienced the fear, danger and excitement of warfare, and many had enhanced their reputations and developed contacts with their social superiors and with their fellow gentry soldiers that would in later years stand them and their families in good stead.

The warrior gentry of the localities have been so little studied in regional analyses partly as a consequence of the time frames in which most late medieval county histories are set. Collectively McFarlane and his heirs have shown that there was far more to the fifteenth century than power-hunger and self-interested backstabbing. Naturally the Wars of the Roses figure prominently in the resuscitation of this century, as do the efforts of modern historians to break down the invisible wall between Plantagenet and Tudor England.³⁸ Most political studies of late medieval English counties have thus focused upon the fifteenth, rather than the fourteenth, century. Simon Payling examined the Nottinghamshire gentry in the Lancastrian age (c. 1400-1460). Eric Acheson's study of the Leicestershire gentry spanned the period from 1422 to 1485. Christine Carpenter's detailed analysis of Warwickshire society

³⁶ E.g. In his study of the Nottinghamshire greater gentry, Payling discusses the long military career of Sir Thomas Rempston II (d. 1458) primarily in the context of the effect his capture and ransom had on his family's fortunes and on their position within Nottinghamshire society. Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England*, pp. 59-62.

³⁷ M. H. Keen, 'Chivalrous Culture in Fourteenth-Century England', *Historical Studies*, x (1976), 14-22; Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*, pp. 48-100.

³⁸ For continuity into the reign of Henry VII, see S. J. Gunn, *Early Tudor Government 1485-1558* (London, 1995), pp. 1-22; C. Carpenter, *The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England, c.1437-1509* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 16-26, 219-51.

dated from 1401 to 1499. Anthony Pollard investigated the Richmondshire gentry during the Wars of the Roses (c. 1450-1485), and Susan Wright's work on Derbyshire began in 1430 and ended in 1509.³⁹

For Norfolk, the survival of the Paston Letters has incited numerous scholars to delve into the murky world of East Anglian politics during the Lancastrian age. Roger Virgoe analysed the respective roles of the Crown, the nobility, and the shire's governing elite over the course of the fifteenth century;⁴⁰ Philippa Maddern examined law and order in East Anglia between 1422 and 1442;⁴¹ Colin Richmond and Charles Moreton have each written illuminating studies of individual fifteenth-century East Anglian gentry families, the Hoptons and Townshends, while Richmond has additionally composed three lucid works focusing upon the Pastons and the circle of Sir John Fastolf.⁴² In similar vein, individual social networks have been considered in several key articles, most prominently Maddern's discussion of the role of friendship in the gentry's private affairs, and Moreton's consideration of the linkages between the greater and lesser gentry, in which he suggests that the county elite were as likely to befriend their lower born servants, neighbours and tenants as they were great families of their own rank.⁴³ Finally, Helen Castor has recently written a thought-provoking appraisal of Lancastrian rule in the localities, with a large section devoted to East Anglia.⁴⁴

It is a point of some relevance that the only published county histories in which regional military society has been investigated in considerable depth cover

³⁹ Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England*; Acheson, *A Gentry Community*; Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*; Pollard, *The Richmondshire Community*; Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry*.

⁴⁰ Virgoe, 'The Crown, Magnates, and Local Government in Fifteenth-Century East Anglia', pp. 71-87. Virgoe also used Norfolk and Suffolk as case studies when considering the impact of the Crown upon local government in the Ricardian age. Virgoe, 'The Crown and Local Government', pp. 218-41.

⁴¹ P. C. Maddern, *Violence and Social Order: East Anglia 1422-1442* (Oxford, 1992).

⁴² C. Richmond, *John Hopton: A Fifteenth-Century Suffolk Gentleman* (Cambridge, 1981); C. E. Moreton, *The Townshends and their World: Gentry, Law and Land in Norfolk, c. 1450-1551* (Oxford, 1992); Richmond, *The Paston Family: The First Phase*; Richmond, *The Paston Family: Fastolf's Will*; Richmond, *The Paston Family: Endings*.

⁴³ Maddern, "'Best Trusted Friends'", pp. 100-17; Moreton, 'A Social Gulf?', 255-62.

⁴⁴ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 51-189.

slightly earlier periods. To cite the best-known examples, Nigel Saul's study of the Gloucestershire gentry spanned the fourteenth century; Michael Bennett analysed Cheshire and Lancashire society, as he described it, in the 'Age of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', roughly speaking, in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries; while Philip Morgan's specifically military-based analysis of Cheshire, to which we shall return later, focused upon the extensive and much earlier period from 1277 to 1403.⁴⁵ Put simply, for those county histories grounded entirely in the fifteenth century, there is significantly less cause to discuss military society, since substantial portions of these studies examine the decades after c. 1430, when gentry military participation was on the wane, and many continue deep into the latter half of the century, by which time the Hundred Years War had reached its climax and opportunities had effectively ended for Englishmen *en masse* to carve out professional military careers for themselves.⁴⁶

The distinction between politically-focused county histories and nationwide analyses of English war and society should not be overdrawn, however. There is no particular reason why studies of regional political society, focusing upon the internal workings of a single locality, should contain a military component. Military concerns are rarely central to the theses expounded in most county histories, and the world of the shire was a long way from the battlefields of France. It has consequently been in analyses of magnate affinities that the interplay between the military and domestic concerns of the gentry have been most fully explored. The best of such studies span

⁴⁵ Saul, *Knights and Esquires*; Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*; Morgan, *War and Society in Medieval Cheshire*. Another important recent contribution, centred upon a county far away from the west country, is James Ross's study of the Essex warrior gentry in the fifteenth century. J. Ross, 'Essex County Society and the French War in the Fifteenth Century', *The Fifteenth Century VII: Conflicts, Consequences and the Crown in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. L. Clark (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 53-80.

⁴⁶ D. A. L. Morgan has suggested that "it would be unwise to assume that the ending of what we have chosen to call the Hundred Years War...ended the prospects of soldiering as a career". D. A. L. Morgan, 'The Individual Style of the English Gentleman', *Gentry and Lesser Nobility in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. M. Jones (Gloucester, 1986), pp. 22-3. Although this is broadly true, it is certainly clear that such opportunities decreased significantly after 1453. Morgan cites the example of Edmund Paston, who was at one time considering undertaking garrison duty at Calais. Yet this type of service would have been one of the few options available for a late fifteenth-century English soldier looking to serve the Crown. For a fuller discussion, see Chapter Seven.

multiple regions and focus upon the retainers of the lords in question, as much as upon the magnate himself, or upon the structure of the affinity. J. M. W. Bean interpreted the relationship between lord and retainer, focusing upon a variety of affinities, but especially those of John of Gaunt, William Lord Hastings and Edward the Black Prince.⁴⁷ Christopher Given-Wilson analysed the structure of the royal household under Edward III, Richard II and Henry IV, while Simon Walker and David Green more recently provided vibrant examinations of the affinities of Gaunt and the Black Prince.⁴⁸ In each of these works, the great lord in question is the protagonist and the narrative consequently ranges across numerous counties and several regions of England, wherever the lord's influence or landed wealth extended. More importantly, because these magnates recruited gentry for service in war as well as peace, such studies examine the military, as well as the civilian, relationships between lord and retainer, but place these ties in the regional context of the lord's influence over the relevant counties, and in light of the lord's wider recruitment policies throughout the realm. In such studies, therefore, the regional, the national, the domestic, and the military aspects of English gentry life are appropriately intertwined. In the following chapters, the intention is to adhere to this approach, with the key difference that Norfolk's gentry, rather than any particular magnate, will act as the protagonists. At the same time, viewing these relationships from the bottom up, rather than the top down, this thesis will simultaneously consider the wider connections established by Norfolk's knights and esquires with various magnates, with their fellow warriors, and with their civilian associates. In this way, the overlap between the domestic and military priorities of the gentry will be laid bare, through the prism of Norfolk county society.

To reiterate the point, most regional studies of English gentry society have largely glossed over their gentry's martial values and inclinations and have chosen instead to focus primarily upon the machinery of local government, and, above all,

⁴⁷ J. M. W. Bean, *From Lord To Patron: Lordship in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 1989).

⁴⁸ C. Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household and the King's Affinity: Service, Politics and Finance in England, 1360-1413* (New Haven, 1986); S. K. Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity, 1361-1399* (Oxford, 1990); D. S. Green, 'The Household and Military Retinue of Edward the Black Prince' (D.Phil, Nottingham, 1999); Green, 'The Military Personnel of Edward the Black Prince', 133-52; Green, 'Edward the Black Prince and East Anglia', pp. 83-98.

upon the links between politics and society. These are naturally important topics well worth pursuing, but they represent only one aspect of gentry life. As such, by adopting this insular approach, the majority of county studies have missed a prime opportunity to apply to their selected localities some of the fascinating ideas about the nature of gentry military society advocated by historians with an interest in war and martial culture. The world described by Maurice Keen, Peter Coss, Christopher Allmand, Michael Prestwich, Andrew Ayton and Anne Curry, to name but some of the more prominent scholars in this field, at times appears at odds with that depicted in politically-oriented county histories.⁴⁹ The former have portrayed a world in which the armigerous class was essentially a warrior caste, imbued with the values of chivalry, possessing a martial outlook, and intent upon maintaining the honour of their family name by fighting in the king's wars. The prominence of militarily-active gentry is indeed made plain in the criteria for the poll tax returns of 1379, where esquires not possessing lands, rents or chattels, who were in service or who had been armed, were allocated their own specific category.⁵⁰ Yet militarily-active knights and esquires appear in the majority of county histories wholly as office holders, major landowners, and as persons possessing political weight and magnate affiliations. Only in analyses of certain magnate affinities, and in a handful of regional studies, has the overlap between the military and civilian worlds of the county gentry been examined in depth.

To some extent, these issues have arisen simply as a result of the methods of English military recruitment. English armies were comprised of soldiers drawn from all parts of the realm and much of the work concerned with the military in this era has quite understandably been national in scope.⁵¹ The most significant difficulty in relating English soldiering to county society is that the two were virtually separate worlds, unlike the situation in France where Gascons, Normans, Flemings, Bretons and Languedocs spent over a century living intermittently in violent war zones. It is thus unsurprising that the finest appraisal yet written of medieval military society as a socio-cultural organism was penned by a scholar of French history, Philippe

⁴⁹ Preface, n. 3.

⁵⁰ *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, ed. J. Strachey et al. (London, 1783-1832), iii, p. 58. Hereafter, *Rot. Parl.*

⁵¹ A. Ayton, 'English Armies in the Fourteenth Century', *The Wars of Edward III: Sources and Interpretations*, ed. C. J. Rogers (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 303-19.

Contamine, in his magisterial study of *Guerre, état et société* in the later Middle Ages.⁵² Contamine's work too is merely the most wide-ranging of numerous accounts of life in regional France that contain strong military and chivalric elements.⁵³ By contrast, regional studies of English society with a strong military inflection, as touched upon, have been all but exclusively centred in the kingdom's northwest.⁵⁴ The reason for this is readily apparent. Only in the vicinity of the Scottish border and the Welsh Marches did English county communities live in an atmosphere vaguely resembling the on-again off-again war zones prevalent across France. Consequently, the most detailed examination of an English 'military community' has been Philip Morgan's study of Cheshire - a county notorious among contemporary chroniclers for its especially violent temper and the overtly militaristic character of its gentry.⁵⁵

For the rest of England only Nigel Saul in his study of fourteenth-century Gloucestershire, and more recently James Ross in his work on early Lancastrian Essex, have paid considerable attention to the participation of their gentry in the king's wars.⁵⁶ Certainly East Anglia, with its fertile climes and the popular reputation of its lawyer-administrators, has been largely neglected in this regard.⁵⁷ Yet numerous Norfolk knights and esquires fought for their sovereign over the duration of the Hundred Years War and many became prominent captains; a few even achieving membership of the Order of the Garter.⁵⁸ With the exception of Sir John Fastolf though, the military careers of these warriors have for the most part been ignored by scholars intent upon mining the Paston Letters and the archives of the Norfolk Record Office for evidence of political machination and social discontent.⁵⁹ This is why this thesis focuses upon Norfolk's gentry 'military community'. For the historian of war

⁵² Preface, n. 1.

⁵³ See, for example, M. C. E. Jones, *Ducal Brittany, 1364-1399* (Oxford, 1970); M. W. Labarge, *Gascony, England's First Colony, 1204-1453* (London, 1980); M. G. A. Vale, *English Gascony, 1399-1453* (Oxford, 1970); R. Vaughan, *Valois Burgundy* (London, 1975).

⁵⁴ Preface, n. 4. See also, R. Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots* (Oxford, 1965); R. R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the Marches of Wales* (Oxford, 1978).

⁵⁵ Morgan, *War and Society in Medieval Cheshire*, pp. 27-37; *Annales Ricardi Secundi et Henrici Quarti*, J. de Trokelowe et Anon., *Chronica et Annales*, ed. H. T. Riley (London, R.S., 1866), iii, p. 160.

⁵⁶ Saul, *Knights and Esquires*; Ross, 'Essex County Society'.

⁵⁷ See Chapter Two.

⁵⁸ See Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

⁵⁹ Preface, n. 6.

and society, it contributes a regional military study centred upon a part of the kingdom whose gentry were not especially recognised by contemporaries for their martial zeal. At the same time, for scholars of political society in the localities, it provides an opportunity to investigate a much-analysed county from a slightly different perspective; to move back into the period before the ascent of the Pastons; and to shed light upon an otherwise unappreciated aspect of Norfolk history. More generally, it may be said that England's warrior class merit investigation in regional studies on their own terms, as military men, rather than merely being subsumed into the civilian world of landowning, office holding, local politics and strategic marriages, which formed only one part of their lives and only one element in the development of their social and cultural outlook.

Definition and Description

The foremost difficulty when undertaking a military study of a single county is that the gentry soldier, in his domestic life, operated in the same milieu as his neighbouring civilian contemporaries. In essence he slotted back into the social structure of his locality, whilst simultaneously belonging to a specifically military caste with a purposefully martial function - a body of warriors that was national, if not international, in scope.⁶⁰ Given the nature of surviving source materials, much more is known about the military records of the greater gentry than of their lesser gentry counterparts. Consequently, it will be these 'greater gentry' - the foremost knights and esquires in Norfolk society - who will represent the principal *dramatis personae* of this thesis. By focusing upon this narrow elite, two questions must be addressed from the outset: namely, how will the terminology employed in the ensuing chapters - 'greater gentry', 'lesser gentry', 'warrior gentry', 'county elite' and 'knightly elite' - be defined, and by what yardstick does one determine who is, and is not, a Norfolk man?

Defining the gentry as a collective group, even when only concerned with a single locality, has become something of a conundrum for scholars of regional society, largely because the term 'gentry' is itself a social construct of the historian, apt to engender confusion since one is essentially applying a handy label to the

⁶⁰ Keen, *Chivalry*, pp. 18-63, 143-237.

complex social realities of medieval life.⁶¹ In the words of G. E. Mingay the term remains one of those:

vastly convenient portmanteau expressions which historians are obliged to employ in formulating the broad generalisations that make up the main strands of the historical fabric.⁶²

County historians have consequently expended considerable energy arguing over the semantics of terminology and attempting to categorise a world that surely must have been comparatively fluid to those who lived in it. To cite a few notable examples, Susan Wright described the Derbyshire gentry as all who:

provided a knight or were distrained, served as knights of the shire, sheriff, justice of the peace, commissioner of array, escheator or tax collector, together with those who were recorded in inquisitions post mortem or in five tax returns from 1412 to 1524-7 as having an income of 5 pounds or over or as a tenant-in-chief,⁶³

and added that the possession of gentility “very much depended on an individual’s own view of his position, lifestyle and initiative, and on the opinion of his neighbours”.⁶⁴ Eric Acheson categorised the Leicestershire gentry as those whose family names were found in the 1428 and 1436 subsidies, alongside those who acted as county office holders;⁶⁵ Simon Payling, using the income tax returns of 1436, defined the Nottinghamshire gentry collectively as “all lay, non-baronial landowners with an income of £5 per annum or more from freehold property”;⁶⁶ as a final example, Christine Carpenter, in her study of the Warwickshire gentry, suggested, like Wright, Acheson and Payling, a correlation between gentility and

⁶¹ P. R. Coss, ‘The Formation of the English Gentry’, *Past and Present*, cxlvii (1995), 38-42.

⁶² G. E. Mingay, *The Gentry: The Rise and Fall of a Ruling Class* (London, 1976), p. 1.

⁶³ Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry*, p. 4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁵ Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, p. 38.

⁶⁶ Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England*, p. 3.

landownership.⁶⁷ Additionally, Rosemary Horrox has pointed to the existence of urban gentry, who never maintained country estates and who never held county office (as distinct from city office), yet whose incomes and influence within town walls made them indisputably persons of consequence and members of gentry society.⁶⁸ War service too acted as a badge of gentility for the established knightly elite of the localities. Participation in warfare was in many cases a family tradition, and, as we shall see in later chapters, a core of prominent Norfolk knights - long at the apex of county society - served in the king's wars generation after generation between the 1280s and the 1430s. Collectively then, taking all of the above factors into consideration, current scholarship suggests that landed wealth, a comparatively substantial annual income, active participation in local government, status and education associated with the professions (war, law, administration and commerce), and the popular opinion of one's neighbours, were the traits that identified the gentry and separated them from the commoners beneath them. Having said this, of course, there were naturally considerable differences between the concerns, lifestyle and outlook of a powerful local knight, a *parvenu*, or a lowly esquire of limited horizons.

So how does this broad definition relate in practice to the militarily-active gentry? Amongst the military ranks of gentry society, it is especially clear that income and social status, although they broadly went hand in hand, did not always perfectly correlate with one another. This is borne out in the sumptuary legislation of 1363 and the poll tax returns of 1379.⁶⁹ In the former, esquires were subdivided into wealthier and poorer men of this rank. The wealthier were described as possessing £200 or more, while the poorer were grouped with "*toutes maneres de Gentils gentz desouth lestat de Chivaler*" whose incomes were below £100.⁷⁰ This demarcation was reinforced in 1379, when bachelor knights, and esquires who ought to be knights, were ordered to pay 20s.; esquires of lesser estate were to pay 6s. 8d.; and an esquire not possessing lands, rents or chattels, who was in service or who had been armed,

⁶⁷ Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, pp. 92-5.

⁶⁸ R. Horrox, 'The Urban Gentry in the Fifteenth Century', *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. J. A. F. Thomson (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 22-44.

⁶⁹ Saul, *Knights and Esquires*, pp. 17-19; P. R. Coss, 'Knights, Esquires and the Origins of Social Gradation in England', *TRHS*, 6th Series, v (1995), 168-72.

⁷⁰ *Statutes of the Realm* (London, Records Commission, 1810-28), i, pp. 380-1, translated as "all manner of gentle men below the estate of knight". Hereafter, *Stat. Realm*.

was to pay 3s. 4d..⁷¹ Gentry soldiers thus ranged from men of limited means desperately seeking to make a living from the profits of war, to great knights who fought to fulfil family traditions of military service and to uphold their good name as much as to derive financial gain from their undertakings.

When one turns to the original vocabulary adopted by late medieval scribes, the military origins of the knight and esquire are further laid bare, underlining that, despite the substantial role they came to play in county politics during this era, they were nonetheless still essentially regarded as a military caste. In focusing upon contemporary word usage, one is naturally confronted with three languages - Latin, French and the English vernacular - each of which uses terms that have more than one translation, thereby further complicating one's attempts at social delineation.⁷² Focusing simply upon the knight and esquire, the former is indisputably the more straightforward to define. In French, the 'knight' is *chivalier*, in Latin *miles*. Yet he was also a man of *gentil homme*, for which no Latin equivalent existed until the adoption of *generosus* in the fifteenth century. The main complexity surrounding the knight was that nobles, barons and bannerets had also been knighted, sharing the same military function, while the knight bachelor, possessing household connotations, represented a variant not entirely explained to this day.⁷³

The term 'esquire', stemming from the French *écuyer* or *escuier*, is highly ambiguous. The Latin terms *armiger*, *scutifer* and *serviens*, which respectively translate as armour-bearer, shield-bearer and servant, were generally used as alternative meanings, yet each essentially meant little more than 'mounted man-at-arms'. Such terminology possessed entirely military connotations, for other phrases, like *probi homines* or *bones gentz* were used to describe sub-knightly men of gentle blood in the domestic context of regional society. To further complicate matters, the term *valettus*, translated as 'valet', was also employed as a broad synonym for

⁷¹ *Rot. Parl.*, iii, p. 58.

⁷² What follows utilises the detailed research of Saul and Coss. Saul, *Knights and Esquires*, pp. 6-29; Coss, 'Knights, Esquires and the Origins of Social Gradation', 155-78. Their views are summarised and nuanced by Keen. Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*, pp. 72-86.

⁷³ For an analysis of the knight bachelor, see J. M. W. Bean, "'Bachelor" and Retainer', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, New Series, iii (1972), 117-31; Bean, *From Lord To Patron*, pp. 22-33.

armiger and *scutifer*. Yet by the middle third of the fourteenth century, the starting point of this thesis, *armiger* had come to represent the preferable translation of 'esquire', while *scutifer* and *serviens* had fallen into disuse, and 'valet' had developed a more demeaning, service connotation, that made it similar in meaning to 'yeoman' by the fifteenth century, by which time the latter was the highest rank of the sub-gentle. These ambiguities underscore the martial function of the knight and esquire and reinforce the point that such men were members of a military class who, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, were gradually superimposed upon, and integrated into, the domestic social hierarchy of regional landowning society.⁷⁴

By the later fourteenth century it has been well established that there was little to distinguish between the knight and esquire on the field of battle, yet this may be considered equally true within the confines of county society. It would seem hazardous to attempt to reconstruct a county's social order by neatly subdividing the gentry into specific categories, even those based upon contemporary usage, since there proliferate examples of poor knights, of rich esquires, of men possessing political weight but minimal income, of men of considerable wealth who avoided the world of politics and office holding, and of officious bureaucrats who made themselves indispensable in local administration. Moreover, many gentry were important people within their county in some of these respects but not in others. In the following chapters, therefore, rather than focusing upon a particular number of individuals or families who are specifically designated as the county's 'greater gentry', one will rather assume that the great men of the county are indirectly apparent; if they held important shire offices, owned large tracts of land, were politically influential, or were held in high regard by the higher nobility, then they may be considered members of the 'greater gentry'. For some, their families were at the forefront of Norfolk society as a result of decades of land-lordship, office holding and military service. For others, careerism had seen them rise to the front ranks of their county community. For all, prominence could prove fleeting and Norfolk certainly suffered a considerable, though unquantifiable, turnover rate amongst its knights and wealthier esquires. Few families, for instance, named on the

⁷⁴ A vital step in this process of integration was the increasing participation of knights and esquires on peace commissions, as sheriffs and as M.P.s during the fourteenth century. Musson and Ormrod, *The Evolution of English Justice*, pp. 1-11, 68-73.

Parliamentary Roll of 1308, or summoned to Edward II's military council in 1324, were still prominent in the county by 1430.⁷⁵

The 'greater gentry' are the protagonists of this work, but it is naturally also necessary to define the other terms adopted regularly in the following chapters. The 'lesser gentry' will refer in a county context to men of poorer means, who were not active in shire office, and who in many instances were in the employ of one or more 'greater gentry' families. William Worcester, secretary to Sir John Fastolf, may be considered a fine example of such a man.⁷⁶ In a military context, however, the 'lesser gentry' will mean something altogether more specific. It will refer to those obscure, militarily-active esquires who served regularly in the Hundred Years War and whose testimony before the Court of Chivalry will be utilised extensively throughout this thesis. The term 'warrior gentry' will refer to all militarily-active members of Norfolk gentry society, from the county's barons and bannerets, down to lowly esquires. The 'knightly elite' will describe, as a collective group, those prominent knightly families who sat at the apex of Norfolk society, who intermarried extensively, monopolised shire office, and served regularly in the king's wars. In this context, Norfolk's barons and bannerets will be included, since, in the world of the shire, they were essentially the cream of these families. Lastly, the 'county elite' will refer more broadly to the leading thirty or forty families in Norfolk, encompassing both soldiers and civilian gentry - the latter including prominent lawyers, merchants, administrators, and a handful of soldiers of knightly stock who had chosen not to accept the burdens of knighthood.

Beyond defining terminology as it relates to social groups, an equally thorny issue presents itself. Most prominent gentry were of sufficient wealth and prestige that their horizons naturally stretched beyond the borders of a single county. One thus finds the Crown-designated boundaries of individual counties, essentially implemented for the sake of bureaucratic expediency, playing havoc with the historian's reconstruction of the social realities of gentry life. This problem has expressed itself in a vibrant debate about the utility of the term 'community' when

⁷⁵ For these rolls, see below; for the extinction of aristocratic families in the male line, see McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, pp. 172-6.

⁷⁶ For Worcester's career and his relationship with Fastolf, see Chapter Seven.

analysing county societies. In some cases there survives evidence that strongly hints at the existence of such cohesive communities, upheld by local gentry whose concerns broadly matched the geographical demarcation points laid down by the royal government.⁷⁷ Several scholars have, for example, pointed to the importance of the county court as a source of 'county-mindedness'.⁷⁸ Perhaps most convincingly, Michael Bennett has utilised a gathering of the Cheshire gentry in 1414, at which those present were largely cooperative and self-regulating, to argue persuasively in favour of this approach.⁷⁹ Importantly, Bennett's study also recognised the wider social and cultural unity of England's northwest in which Cheshire's gentry was simultaneously immersed.⁸⁰ The danger for advocates of this view, when constructing county studies, is that rather than adopting a degree of fluidity in the descriptions of their regions, they instead merely pigeonhole their gentry to one county or another. By these means they may on occasion exclude individuals who possessed a landed stake in the county under consideration but the majority of whose estates were located elsewhere, or they might lay claim to persons who were important players on the political scene in several counties at the same time.⁸¹ This apparent self-imposed artificiality has led some scholars to repudiate entirely the use of the term 'community' as it relates to late medieval and early modern English social history.⁸²

⁷⁷ For a summary of the issues involved, see R. Virgoe, 'Aspects of the County Community in the Fifteenth Century', *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Late Medieval England*, ed. M. Hicks (Gloucester, 1990), pp. 1-13.

⁷⁸ Those who advocate the 'communities' model in their county histories include especially Saul for Gloucestershire, Wright for Derbyshire, Acheson for Leicestershire and Payling for Nottinghamshire; for work on the importance of the county court as a source of county-based cohesion, see esp. J. R. Maddicott, 'The County Community and the Making of Public Opinion in Fourteenth-Century England', *TRHS*, 5th Series, xxviii (1978), 27-43.

⁷⁹ M. J. Bennett, 'A County Community: Social Cohesion amongst the Cheshire Gentry, 1400-1425', *Northern History*, viii (1973), 24-44; Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, pp. 21-40.

⁸⁰ Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, pp. 5-20, 192-235.

⁸¹ Saul, *Knights and Esquires*, pp. 31-2, 258-62; Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry*, pp. 4, 11, 144; Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England*, pp. 7, 15, 217-18; Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, pp. 39, 77-106, 202.

⁸² M. Rubin, 'Small Groups: Identity and Solidarity in the Late Middle Ages', *Enterprise and Individuals in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. J. Kermode (Stroud, 1991), pp. 132-50; C. Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community in Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, xxxiii (1994), 340-80. For an attack upon the concept of the 'county community' in a later epoch, see C. Holmes, 'The County Community in Stuart Historiography', *Journal of British Studies*, xix (1979), 54-73.

In the words of one of its harshest critics, the term has become “a shibboleth”.⁸³ This study, however, falls in line with those who advocate a ‘communities’ model for regional society. It argues both that Norfolk’s greater gentry were the leaders of a distinctive ‘county community’ and, overlapping with this, its foremost knights and esquires were simultaneously the leaders of a ‘military community’ that more broadly covered the whole of East Anglia.⁸⁴

It must be made clear that these communities did not exist solely within the orbit of Norfolk’s borders, for Norfolk was administratively strongly interlinked with Suffolk. Indeed, to a certain degree, their major landholders were indistinguishable from one another, possessing estates in both shires. Unsurprisingly, therefore, in traditional analyses of the region these counties have usually been tackled in tandem or have been subsumed into wider studies of East Anglia.⁸⁵ The exclusion of Suffolk from this thesis thus seemingly creates a distinct problem. However, as with the definition of our militarily-active protagonists, the decision has once again been taken to adopt a pragmatic approach and to accept a degree of imprecision of definition. One cannot adequately examine Norfolk society without accepting the existence of its overt ties to Suffolk. The gentry of these two neighbouring counties were strongly interlinked with one another through kinship and marriage ties, political connections, and professional solidarities, while the evidence that will be cited in later chapters strongly suggests that although shire boundaries possessed administrative and political value, the gentry regularly looked beyond these borders in their private affairs, while the cultural identity of Norfolk’s gentry was more broadly East Anglian in its scope, especially within the world of chivalry and the military community. For this reason no effort will be made to define our protagonists as belonging specifically to Norfolk. Suffice to say therefore that those knights and esquires who feature

⁸³ C. Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1980), p. 3. Cited from Carpenter, ‘Gentry and Community’, 340.

⁸⁴ Philip Morgan analysed Cheshire’s ‘military community’ in his study of military society in the region. For his definition, see Chapter Six, n. 1. Other scholars have likewise adopted the term, perceiving English military society as comprising a plethora of local ‘military communities’. Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses*, pp. 1-8; A. R. Bell, *War and the Soldier in the Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 115.

⁸⁵ The overlap between Norfolk and Suffolk society is especially apparent in the works of Roger Virgoe and Colin Richmond. Preface, n. 6; See also Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 53-189.

regularly in the ensuing chapters will be men who held public office in Norfolk, who were at least intermittently resident in the county, and who were influential in its political structure, yet who simultaneously served extensively in the wars of the 1350 to 1430 period. The approach taken in the following chapters may be considered fluid. Yet it has been adopted as a result of the nature of the surviving source materials - a factor that will be outlined in the remainder of this chapter.

Methodology: The Source Materials and their Limitations

A substantial reason for justifying the methods employed in this study is that our approach differs somewhat from the style of research traditionally undertaken by McFarlane's heirs when analysing particular counties. The starting point in the majority of county histories is the quantification of one's gentry, often setting limits to the number of individuals that will be discussed in the remainder of the work. Since most county studies are firmly rooted in the fifteenth century, there has been a tendency amongst scholars to focus upon the surviving county returns for the payment of royal subsidies.⁸⁶ The Crown undertook fiscal measures of this nature on several occasions during the first half of the fifteenth century. Those that have survived best, and are most regularly utilised by county historians, are (1) the 1412 subsidy returns (especially useful for the greater gentry, since the tax threshold was set at £20 per annum); (2) the 1428 tax on the holders of knights' fees; (3) the income tax returns of 1436; and (4) the subsidy returns of 1451.⁸⁷ Military society, however, was much less socially-oriented than the domestic world of the county gentry, so to categorise Norfolk's warriors by income or landholdings would create arbitrary divisions that have little connection with their martial vocation and which might create the impression of distinct differences between them, when in fact they had much in common in the military sphere.

One fifteenth-century list of Norfolk gentry that does prove useful is the names of those men deemed worthy to take the oath against maintenance imposed by

⁸⁶ E.g. Saul, *Knights and Esquires*, pp. 30-4; Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry*, pp. 3-6; Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England*, pp. 1-18; Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, pp. 36-43.

⁸⁷ See esp. Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England*, pp. 1-18.

a wary royal government in 1434.⁸⁸ This reveals a great deal about the longevity (or lack thereof) of Norfolk's leading families and also the extent to which the burdens of knighthood were being less readily accepted. Unfortunately, those gentry abroad in France were unavailable to take the oath, meaning that the vast majority of knights and militarily-active esquires - the very group of greatest interest to this study - are unrepresented. It would prove pointless to look deeper into the fifteenth century for county lists. True, these became increasingly common as the century wore on, but the rolls of arms compiled by the heralds, or the county-by-county lists of lords, knights, esquires and gentlemen authorised by the Crown, are of little use to us, since they occur long after 1430 and would consequently include significant numbers of families like the Pastons, only recently entered into the gentry, but who had acquired arms by successfully concocting tales of their own ancient gentility.⁸⁹

If one cannot look any further forward, then one must perforce turn back into the fourteenth century for surviving evidence. Nigel Saul, in his work on Gloucestershire, highlighted the limitations of the available source materials for this period.⁹⁰ Essentially, apart from occasional county-wide heraldic rolls, there survive no reasonably quantifiable nominal lists on a county-by-county basis between 1344 and the fall of Richard II. The closest one comes is the poll tax returns of 1379, yet these are highly fragmented and, undertaken on a hundred-by-hundred basis, provide the names of only a few prominent Norfolk gentry landholders from the sporadic hundreds whose returns have come down to us.⁹¹ The 1344 returns appear more promising. In that year a commission was appointed in each county to compile lists of all laymen with incomes of £5, £10, £25, 100 marks, £100 etc. up to £1,000.⁹² It was the Gloucestershire returns from this commission that Saul utilised as his

⁸⁸ *CPR, 1429-36*, pp. 404-7. Feudal Aids are also of considerable use. However their utilisation as a means of reconstructing Norfolk military society would prove a mammoth and potentially fruitless undertaking in its own right, so the decision has been taken to adopt a qualitative approach and focus upon exemplars.

⁸⁹ Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*, pp. 21, 102.

⁹⁰ Saul, *Knights and Esquires*, pp. 30-5.

⁹¹ *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, ed. C. C. Fenwick (Oxford, 1998).

⁹² *CPR, 1343-5*, pp. 414-16.

chronologically latest marker in his fourteenth-century study.⁹³ The Norfolk returns too survive - unfortunately they are so badly damaged as to be essentially illegible.⁹⁴

As such, in the search for a contemporary list of Norfolk gentry, one must move back still further, into the early years of the fourteenth century. Here there survives abundant information. Most prominently, heraldic rolls were regularly compiled throughout the reigns of the first two Edwards, at a time when there were far fewer armigerous gentry in England than was the case by the following century. One is ostensibly interested in uncovering detailed lists of Norfolk's knights, in order to provide a broad numerical framework for the county's gentry military community, since most knights in this era would have served in war at least occasionally. The two lists that have been selected are both comprehensive and one at least is military-based. The Parliamentary Roll of 1308 is one of the fullest county-by-county lists of knights, from which it becomes apparent that Norfolk possessed the highest proportion of knights of any county in the kingdom at that time.⁹⁵ The second list comprises the names of those knights from the shire summoned to attend the great military council of 1324.⁹⁶ These documents are significantly earlier in the century than would have been preferable, yet, given the lack of later sources, they will provide a useful early marker from which one may extrapolate forward into the 1350-1430 period.

This may be done with some confidence since two lists of knights, both commemorative, survive from later decades. Firstly, there exists a little-known heraldic roll of Norfolk and Suffolk knights, dating from c. 1400, that included men known to have been alive around this date, as well as others who figure in the 1324 summons and must therefore have been long dead.⁹⁷ Secondly, two decades after this, Sir Thomas Erpingham, Norfolk's foremost representative at the Lancastrian court and a recently retired soldier in his own right,⁹⁸ ordered the construction of a window in the Austin Friary at Norwich that commemorated those Norfolk and Suffolk

⁹³ Saul, *Knights and Esquires*, pp. 33-5.

⁹⁴ TNA, C47/1/18/21 (holders of lands in Norfolk and Suffolk worth £40); TNA, C47/2/39/43 (holders of lands in Norfolk and Suffolk worth £5).

⁹⁵ *Parliamentary Writs*, ed. F. Palgrave (London, 1827-34), i, p. 415. Hereafter, *Parl. Writs*.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, ii, ii, pp. 641-3.

⁹⁷ Oxford: Queen's College, MS. 158, pp. 295-304.

⁹⁸ For Erpingham's career, see esp. Chapters Two and Three.

knights who had died without male issue since 1327.⁹⁹ Collectively therefore, these four lists, dating from 1308, 1324, c. 1400 and 1419, will give one a firm impression of who the county's leading knightly families were, while the collapse in the male line of many of these families by 1430 reminds one of just how fluid Norfolk gentry society was. This thesis will adopt an ostensibly qualitative approach, so these lists will not be examined at length from a numerical standpoint in their own right. However, they provide a useful quantitative backdrop when analysing the nature of Norfolk military society - a backdrop that will be discussed in the context of Norfolk's population and social structure when introducing the county in Chapter Two.

The fact that this is a regional military study provides the most fundamental reason for shying away from quantitative analysis in favour of a qualitative approach.¹⁰⁰ It also explains why no attempt will be made to adjudge precisely the overall size of Norfolk's military community,¹⁰¹ since the limitations of surviving military records would render such an undertaking impossible. Evidence of gentry military participation is most often found in occasional heraldic rolls (which have already been mentioned), in the surviving pay accounts for individual expeditions, in

⁹⁹ The window is no longer extant. A copy was transcribed in the eighteenth century by the antiquary Francis Blomefield. Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, iv, pp. 86-8; See Chapters Six and Seven.

¹⁰⁰ Several landmark studies of English military society have been undertaken in recent years utilising computer databases and detailed quantitative analysis. E.g. Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses*; and esp. A. Curry, 'The Soldier in later Medieval England', [<http://www.inmacentre.ac.uk/soldier/database>]; also A. Curry, 'Database' (on CD Rom). Such an approach is of greater utility when focusing upon a particular campaign or series of campaigns on a national scale. It is far harder to quantify one's subject matter when one is selecting certain individuals from a campaign on the basis of their county of origin - especially when one is aware that many other gentry men-at-arms from the county in question would have served, but do not survive by name in the records for the expedition.

¹⁰¹ Reconstructing the personnel of any particular region, be it for a military purpose or not, represents a massive undertaking. Moreover, as the historiography surrounding the 'communities' model has shown, one cannot be categorical about who hailed from which county, since there is to be found too much overlap of personnel on a regional basis. The most thorough reconstruction of a county society has been undertaken by Carpenter for the Warwickshire gentry. Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, pp. 645-82.

letters of protection and attorney, in military indentures and in pardons for service.¹⁰² Pardons are highly fragmentary in nature and merely include men with criminal backgrounds, prepared to fight for the king in return for a clean slate. The rest are heavily weighted towards the knight and wealthier esquire. Military subcontracts are rare - their chance discovery worthy of publication¹⁰³ - while the indentures made between magnates and the knights and esquires whom they retained are usually not specifically military-based documents, but refer to service in both war and peace.¹⁰⁴ Letters of protection and attorney were designed to ensure the safety of one's property whilst abroad on campaign and as such those who took out these letters tended to be substantial gentry with estates worth protecting.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, because of the contractual methods by which fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English armies were constructed, the evidence from pay accounts is equally limited. Paymasters would hand out wages to the captains of retinues, who would in turn pay their own men. Thus, in royally led campaigns for which detailed records survive, the king's war captains were the ones listed by name as receiving specific wages, while everyone else has come down to the modern scholar as anonymous numerals in the retinues of these men.¹⁰⁶ The breadth of the surviving evidence suggests that there exists plenty of scope for analysing Norfolk's military elite - the county's foremost knights and esquires, who were equally central to local political society - but far less opportunity for investigating those military men lower down the county's social ladder; the type of men described by the compilers of the poll tax returns of 1379 as esquires of lesser

¹⁰² Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses*, pp. 1-8; Ayton, 'War and the English Gentry under Edward III', 34-40; Ayton, 'English Armies in the Fourteenth Century', pp. 305-7.

¹⁰³ Goodman, 'The Military Subcontracts of Sir Hugh Hastings', 114-20; Walker, 'Profit and Loss', 100-6.

¹⁰⁴ 'Indentures of Retinue with John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, Enrolled in Chancery, 1367-1399', ed. N. B. Lewis, *Camden Miscellany XXII* (London, Camden Soc., 4th Series, i, 1964), pp. 77-112; 'Private Indentures for Life Service in Peace and War', ed. M. Jones and S. K. Walker, *Camden Miscellany XXXII* (London, Camden Soc., 5th Series, iii, 1994), pp. 9-190.

¹⁰⁵ Ayton, 'English Armies in the Fourteenth Century', pp. 305-7.

¹⁰⁶ E.g. In the pay accounts for the Rheims expedition of 1359-60. TNA, E101/393/11. Andrew Ayton has sought to overcome this lack of evidence by concentrating upon horse inventories, which, although miscellaneous, are not solely limited to the captains of expeditions. Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses*, p. 5.

estate, or those who possessed no lands, rents or chattels, yet who were in service or had been armed.¹⁰⁷

Fortunately, the evidence from two disputes before the Court of Chivalry, each involving a Norfolk man as defendant, sheds considerable light upon the lower echelons of East Anglian military society.¹⁰⁸ The Court of Chivalry served a specifically martial function.¹⁰⁹ Its purview comprised cases relating to chivalric matters that were not covered by the English common law. These included (1) disputes between rival parties, arising from the conduct of war, such as claims relating to ransoms, the division of spoils, or the destruction of property by English soldiers; (2) appeals against a judgment in which the defendant offered to prove his innocence by judicial combat; (3) the treason trials of captives seized amidst civil war; and (4) disputes over rights to certain heraldic arms. These two Norfolk-centric disputes fall into the last of these categories.¹¹⁰

The earlier case arose in 1386-7 and involved the Norfolk baron, Thomas, fourth Lord Morley of Hingham, who was forced to defend his right to his family's

¹⁰⁷ *Rot. Parl.*, iii, p. 58.

¹⁰⁸ Aside from these two, only one other case survives in bulk. *The Controversy Between Sir Richard Scrope and Sir Robert Grosvenor in the Court of Chivalry c.1385-1390*, ed. N. H. Nicolas, 2 vols. (London, 1832). Hereafter, *Scrope v. Grosvenor*. A handful of other disputes survive in part. A. Rogers, 'Hoton versus Shakell: A Ransom Case in the Court of Chivalry, 1390-5', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, vi (1962), 74-108; A. Rogers, 'Hoton versus Shakell: A Ransom Case in the Court of Chivalry, 1390-5', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, vii (1963), 53-78; J. G. Bellamy, 'Sir John de Annesley and the Chandos Inheritance', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, x (1966), 94-105; M. Jones, 'Roches contre Hawley: la cour anglaise de chevalerie et un cas de piraterie à Brest 1386-1402', *Memoires de la société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Bretagne*, lxxiv (1987), 53-64; 'Morley v. Montagu', ed. M. Warner and M. H. Keen, *Camden Miscellany XXXIV* (London, Camden Soc., 5th Series, x, 1997).

¹⁰⁹ Other scholars who have utilised disputes before the Court of Chivalry in their works include Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, pp. 82-3, 166; Morgan, *War and Society in Medieval Cheshire*, pp. 128-30; Ayton, 'Armorial Cases before the Court of Chivalry', pp. 81-104; Keen, 'English Military Experience and the Court of Chivalry', pp. 167-85; Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*, pp. 25-70; J. T. Rosenthal, *Telling Tales: Sources and Narration in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 2003), pp. 63-94; Bell, *War and the Soldier*, pp. 140-50.

¹¹⁰ M. H. Keen, 'The Jurisdiction and Origins of the Constable's Court', *Nobles, Knights and Men-At-Arms in the Middle Ages*, ed. M. H. Keen (London, 1996), pp. 135-48; Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*, pp. 25-42.

arms, *argent a lion rampant sable crowned and armed or*, against John Lord Lovel of Oxfordshire and Wiltshire, after both men had borne them on Richard II's Scottish campaign in 1385.¹¹¹ Lovel brought his case before the Court of Chivalry, claiming the arms were his by descent from the Lords Burnell, while Morley countered by stating they were his from the time of the Conquest. Morley too had a useful precedent to support his position, for during the siege of Calais in 1347, Nicholas Lord Burnell had similarly challenged the right of Morley's grandfather, Lord Robert, to bear the arms in question and the dispute had been adjudicated in Lord Robert's favour. Eventually the same verdict was reached and Lord Thomas was allowed to keep his arms.¹¹²

The second dispute, which was heard between 1407 and 1410 and pitted the Norfolk knight Sir Edward Hastings of Elsing against Reginald Lord Grey of Ruthin, was no less complicated.¹¹³ Both men had participated on Henry IV's Scottish expedition in 1400 bearing the arms *or a manche gules*, indisputably those belonging to the Hastings earls of Pembroke, whose family line had been extinct since 1389, when the last earl had died childless, accidentally killed in the lists during a tournament. As such, the crux of this dispute was really the fact that both Hastings and Grey were claiming to be the rightful heir to the Pembroke arms. Sir Edward, who had only recently attained his majority when the case came before the Court, hailed from a notable cadet branch of the Pembroke earls. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather had all distinguished themselves in the wars in France and elsewhere and he was thus the heir to a family of significant martial prestige. After a longwinded process, featuring numerous appeals, Grey was finally awarded the arms, while the unfortunate Hastings, having spent considerable sums on the defence of his case, was committed to prison for debt, where he languished for over two decades, railing against those who had dishonoured his once proud family name.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ TNA, C47/6/1.

¹¹² See also Ayton, 'Armorial Cases before the Court of Chivalry', pp. 81-104; Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*, pp. 44-5.

¹¹³ The testimony from this dispute survives in the form of a seventeenth-century transcript. *PCM*.

¹¹⁴ C. G. Young, *Reginald Lord Grey and Sir Edward Hastings* (London, 1841); R. I. Jack, 'Entail and Descent: The Hastings Inheritance, 1370 to 1436', *BIHR*, xxxviii (1965), 1-19; Keen, 'English Military Experience and the Court of Chivalry', pp. 167-85; Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*, pp. 45-6.

Since Norfolk knights were the protagonists in each of these disputes, many of their witnesses hailed from their native county (and more broadly from East Anglia), with the result that their testimony collectively opens a window into the world of East Anglian gentry military society at both its upper and lower reaches. Through a combination of pay accounts, letters of protection and attorney, heraldic rolls, pardons for service, and these two disputes before the Court of Chivalry, it will be possible to reconstruct the careers of numerous Norfolk knights and esquires who served extensively in the king's wars between 1350 and 1430. Why these men fought, what values they upheld, how they interacted with each other, with their civilian contemporaries, and with their noble employers, and what roles they played in Norfolk county society, form the content of the ensuing chapters.

Conclusion

Norfolk was a large and populous county. By dint of this fact alone, it naturally would have supplied a considerable number of soldiers to royal and ducal expeditions during the age of the Hundred Years War. For the scholar of war and society, therefore, this study provides an analysis of a regional gentry 'military community' whose renown seemingly failed to match that achieved by the warriors of the borderlands and West Marches. For historians with an abiding interest in local political society, and for advocates of a Namierian approach to the examination of regional history, this thesis seeks to make the gentry, rather than the county itself, the central players in the narrative. Its overarching purpose is to demonstrate that the gentry soldier - be he a prominent knight, or a lowly esquire - essentially lived two lives: he was a landowner, in the case of the elite very likely immersed in county politics, with widespread connections amongst his fellow gentry and the higher nobility that transcended county borders; but he was also a warrior, imbued with the martial values of chivalry and seeking to carve out an honourable and profitable career for himself in the numerous military enterprises that were waged between 1350 and 1430. How Norfolk's warrior gentry sought to strike a balance between their martial vocation and their civilian concerns may be considered the overriding theme of this study.

NORFOLK 1350-1430

One cannot commence an investigation of Norfolk military society between 1350 and 1430 without first outlining what the county was like during this period. Those gentry who stood at the forefront of both the county community and the military community were naturally affected by developments in their native shire, and, like most counties during the fourteenth century, Norfolk experienced rapid change, especially in the decades following the outbreak of the Black Death in East Anglia in March 1349.¹ Norfolk was one of England's most populous counties and as such possessed a significant body of knights and esquires, whose presence on early Edwardian rolls of arms, and whose appearance at the Grand Military Council of 1324, revealed them to be the social and military elite of their shire.²

The purpose of this chapter is to examine three different aspects of life in Norfolk during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, in order to provide the necessary backdrop for the study of military society in the region that is to follow. Firstly, the county's landscape, economy and society will be briefly considered, since these everyday matters - rather than the world of war and politics - were those that most regularly preoccupied Norfolk's gentry. Secondly, one will consider the developing political scene in the county between the high Edwardian age and the minority of Henry VI, for many of those who stood at the head of the military community were simultaneously shire office holders and leading players in East Anglian politics. Finally, one will take the straightforward, though necessary, step of briefly introducing those individuals and families who will feature prominently in this thesis, particularly those warrior gentry who may be considered our protagonists.

Landscape, Economy and Society

Situated along the kingdom's east coast, overlooking the North Sea, Norfolk is geographically one of England's largest counties, and during the Middle Ages was

¹ P. Ziegler, *The Black Death* (London, 1969), p. 167.

² See Chapter One.

one of its most densely populated as well.³ Despite its size, Norfolk was, in the words of one recent scholar, “not on the way to anywhere”.⁴ From the port town of Lynn in the west to Yarmouth in the east, Norfolk’s border comprised one long coastline. Just south of Lynn lay Lincolnshire, with Cambridgeshire to the county’s southwest and Suffolk stretching along its southern border. Administratively, Norfolk was inextricably linked to Suffolk - the two sharing a single shrievalty during the later medieval period.⁵ Moreover, as already emphasised, the greater gentry of Norfolk and Suffolk during these centuries were to some degree indistinguishable from one other, in so far as many of their leading families owned estates and held local office in both counties.⁶ In light of its geographical isolation, Norfolk was as likely to receive unwanted visitors from across the sea, as it was guests from further inland, and the regular royal exhortations that the county’s knightly elite should array troops and defend the coast highlight its perilous location, although as events transpired most continental incursions occurred further to the south.

The county’s history in the centuries prior to 1350 attests to the reality of these perils. The region was originally conquered by the Angles, who absorbed it as part of their kingdom of East Anglia.⁷ In 838 the Danes raided England’s eastern shoreline

³ A conservative estimate, extrapolating from the Poll Tax returns of 1377, suggests that the county’s population was over 146,000, despite the ravages of the Black Death. Only the Yorkshire counties collectively contained a larger population according to these returns, which excluded children, beggars, and tax dodgers. Norfolk’s return of 88,797 people was significantly greater than the next two most populous counties, Suffolk and Somerset, whose populations were judged respectively as 58,610 and 54,604. J. C. Russell, *British Medieval Population* (Albuquerque, 1948), pp. 54, 132-3; R. B. Dobson, *The Peasants’ Revolt of 1381* (London, 1970), pp. 54-7. See also, E. J. Buckatzsch, ‘The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1086-1843’, *EcHR*, 2nd Series, iii (1950), 186-7; R. S. Schofield, ‘The Geographical Distribution of Wealth in England, 1334-1649’, *EcHR*, New Series, xviii (1965), 483-510.

⁴ Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, p. 184. Walker used this phrase when referring to John of Gaunt’s irregular visits to the county, but the same may be said about any other absentee noblemen, or indeed about the English sovereigns of this epoch.

⁵ *List of Sheriffs for England and Wales* (London, PRO Lists and Indexes, ix, 1898), pp. 86-7.

⁶ Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, pp. 5, 10-11, 258-61.

⁷ By the seventh century, Norfolk seems to have been recognised as a distinct region. In 673 the diocese of East Anglia was divided into two sees - one in Norfolk, the other in Suffolk. Although this may conceivably have represented the moment of separation between the two counties, it more likely reflected an administrative

for the first time, and over the next two and a half centuries the inhabitants of Norfolk would find themselves directly ensnared in the whirlpool of Danish invasion and Saxon counterattack. A Danish army wintered in the region in 866 and in the following year defeated and killed the Saxon king, Edmund, at the battle of Thetford, along what would become the Norfolk-Suffolk border. At this time the Danes began to settle in East Anglia, using the region as a base from which to launch assaults further inland. During the tenth and early eleventh centuries, Norfolk suffered regular destruction caused by Danish-Saxon conflict, most notoriously the burning of Norwich and Thetford by the Danes in 1003.⁸ By the early eleventh century East Anglia had developed a significant Scandinavian population and the region's importance was certainly recognised by King Cnut, once he had united England under Danish rule in 1016, for East Anglia became one of the four earldoms into which he divided his realm.⁹ In the centuries following the Norman Conquest, however, Norfolk gradually became peripheral to the world of high politics, as the possibility of foreign invasion became more of a threat than a reality and the region ceased to act as a battleground for warring armies. The county's last principal moment on the national scene occurred in 1075, when its earl, Ralph de Gael, rebelled against King William and fled across the Channel, leaving his countess, Emma, to defend Norwich castle against a royal siege.¹⁰

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as England's Norman and Plantagenet sovereigns assumed greater control over their realm, Norfolk became increasingly introverted, enhancing its reputation as a wealthy centre of trade and commerce, and effectively representing the heartland of the estates of the Bigod earls of Norfolk and the Warenne earls of Surrey.¹¹ The Bigods became extinct in the direct male line in 1306, after which the earldom of Norfolk was granted to Thomas of Brotherton, half-brother of Edward II, who himself died without male heir in 1338.¹² The Warennes maintained their prominent position in East Anglia until their

adherence to a division that was already widely acknowledged. *VCH Norfolk*, ii, p. 467; Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, p. 5.

⁸ *VCH Norfolk*, ii, pp. 467-8.

⁹ L. M. Larson, 'The Political Policies of Cnut as King of England', *The American Historical Review*, xv (1910), 724-5; *VCH Norfolk*, ii, p. 468.

¹⁰ *CP*, ix, pp. 573-4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, ix, p. 576.

¹² *VCH Norfolk*, ii, pp. 478-9.

extinction in 1347, although their ongoing quarrel with Thomas, earl of Lancaster, provided a noteworthy source of local tension in Norfolk that would only end with Earl Thomas' defeat at the battle of Borroughbridge in 1322.¹³ Importantly, in terms of Norfolk's military community, the county's knightly elite firmly established themselves during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries as military leaders, prepared to serve their sovereign in his wars. Prominent baronial and knightly families, like the Bardolfs, Morleys, Scales', Feltons, Playses and Kerdistons, all participated in the Welsh, French and Scottish wars of Edward I, thereby providing rich traditions of military service to the Crown which, as we shall see, their descendants would later uphold as the fourteenth century progressed.¹⁴

Moving from this thumbnail sketch of Norfolk's history to the region's landscape and topography, one of the most limpid physical descriptions of the Norfolk countryside was penned, amidst the internecine strife of the English Civil War and the Interregnum, by the seventeenth-century antiquary, Thomas Fuller. He wrote:

All England may be carved out of Norfolk...Here are fens and heaths, and light and deep, and sand and clay ground, and meadows and pasture, and arable and woody, and (generally) woodless land...so Norfolk, collectively taken, hath a sufficient result of pleasure and profit, that being supplied in one part which is defective in another.¹⁵

Fuller's words highlight Norfolk's varied landscape, which had allowed the shire's mixed economy to thrive, and which had played a pivotal role in making it amongst the wealthiest counties in the realm during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Norfolk possessed a fragmented and complex manorial structure and patterns of land

¹³ Ancestors of some of the families discussed in this study fought each other in this battle. Sir Robert Walkefare and Sir Thomas Rosceylen, for example, received pardons from the Crown for having taken Earl Thomas' side, while those who served on the royalist side included William Lord Bardolf and Sir Hamo Strange. *CCR*, 1318-23, p. 580; *CCR*, 1327-30, p. 309; *VCH Norfolk*, ii, p. 480.

¹⁴ *VCH Norfolk*, ii, p. 479.

¹⁵ T. Fuller, *The Worthies of England*, ed. and intro. J. Freeman (London, 1952), p. 402.

tenure, which granted considerable independence to its peasantry.¹⁶ Its landlords adopted a mildly *laissez-faire* approach to the management of their estates, tightly regulating their tenants' activities, but accepting that a measure of freedom of action was necessary to better enable a profit to be reaped from the land.¹⁷

In terms both of its topography and economy, Norfolk can be usefully divided into three distinct areas. The northern and western parts of the county were chiefly composed of light soils and open farmland, which enabled the cultivation of crops, notably corn and barley, combined with sheep husbandry.¹⁸ In the county's south and centre, cattle rearing and dairy production predominated, supported by linen weaving in the Waveney valley, and the widespread manufacture of worsted and unworsted cloth. Finally, situated deep in western Norfolk, the fenlands and brecklands provided a marked contrast in landscape to the rest of the county. Its inhabitants waged a continual war against impending flooding and lived on a stretch of land between unreclaimed seaward marshes and the inland fens (where reclamation was already under way). Pasture farming was the dominant industry in this area, providing grazing for livestock, and offering a bountiful harvest to the county's fishermen.¹⁹

These three economic units, so vastly different from one another, allowed their inhabitants to develop distinct regional identities, with differing priorities and agendas. The farmers and merchants of the northwest relied upon overseas trade for the maintenance of their livelihood. The cloth-producers of the south shared this interest, yet the county's dairy farmers, strongly attached to their counterparts in

¹⁶ M. R. Postgate, 'Field Systems of East Anglia', *Studies of Field Systems in the British Isles*, ed. A. H. R. Baker and R. A. Butlin (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 281-324; B. M. S. Campbell, 'The Complexity of Manorial Structure in Medieval Norfolk: A Case Study', *Norfolk Archaeology*, xxxix (1986), 225-61.

¹⁷ K. J. Allison, 'The Sheep-Corn Husbandry of Norfolk in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Agricultural History Review*, v (1957), 12-30; *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk*, ed. P. Wade-Martins, second edition (Norwich, 1994), p. 50; C. Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain 850-1520* (London, 2002), pp. 334-5, 342-3.

¹⁸ T. Williamson, 'Explaining Regional Landscapes: East Anglia and the Midlands in the Middle Ages', *Medieval East Anglia*, ed. C. Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 13.

¹⁹ A. Hassell Smith, *County and Court: Government and Politics in Norfolk, 1558-1603* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 3-8; M. Bailey, *A Marginal Economy? East Anglian Breckland in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1989).

northern Suffolk, were more focused upon domestic markets, represented chiefly by buyers in Norwich and London. Fenmen, by further contrast, were most concerned with the necessities of land reclamation, and, given their proximity to the sea, with the need for defensive installations against foreign raids - an especially pertinent issue between 1350 and 1430, with England heavily engaged in its war with France.²⁰ Beyond these highly localised variations, scholars have also discerned the existence of a distinctive, broadly East Anglian, culture in the region. There were to be found distinct schools of East Anglian painting, sculpture, architecture, and manuscript illumination. Dramas, fairs and play cycles all took on a local flavour as well, while the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham granted the region its own cult. Norwich in particular acted as a hub, drawing East Anglians from all walks of life into its orbit.²¹

By the mid-fourteenth century too, a delicate relationship had been forged between Norfolk's landed gentry and the elite merchants, lawyers and businessmen of Norwich, Yarmouth and Lynn.²² Textile production, encompassing the finishing and export of cloth and woolens, was Norwich's primary industry in the century and a half after the Black Death.²³ Yarmouth, as an outlet for international trade via the North Sea, profited from the carriage of wine and wool, and was also England's major source of herring.²⁴ Lynn's prominence was founded upon its export of wool and, most importantly, grain, given that it was the port-town nearest to the corn-sheep

²⁰ Hassell Smith, *County and Court*, p. 8. For assaults upon English coastal towns, see J. R. Alban, 'English Coastal Defence: Some Fourteenth-Century Modifications within the System', *Patronage, the Crown and the Provinces in Later Medieval England*, ed. R. A. Griffiths (Gloucester, 1981), pp. 57-8; D. M. Palliser, 'Town Defences in Medieval England and Wales', *The Medieval Military Revolution: State, Society and Military Change in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. A. Ayton and J. L. Price (London, 1998), pp. 105-6.

²¹ *The Short Oxford History of Britain. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. R. A. Griffiths (Oxford, 2002), pp. 124-6; see also, G. M. Gibson, *Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1989); V. I. Scherb, *Staging Faith: East Anglian Drama in the Later Middle Ages* (Madison, NJ, 2001).

²² For a brief history of these towns, with a focus upon their parliamentary representation, see *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, i, pp. 512-29.

²³ E. Rutledge, 'Economic Life', *Medieval Norwich*, ed. C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (London, 2004), pp. 174-9; P. Dunn, 'Trade', *Medieval Norwich*, ed. C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (London, 2004), p. 215.

²⁴ A. Saul, 'Great Yarmouth and the Hundred Years War in the Fourteenth Century', *BIHR*, lii (1979), 105-6.

farmers of the county's northwest.²⁵ The intricate network of rivers that flowed through Norfolk facilitated the mercantile prosperity of these urban centres. Lynn was uniquely positioned at the head of several waterways whose tributaries extended deep into the Midlands. This made it England's chief domestic supplier of grain and allowed its merchants to reap further profits by returning to Norfolk with cargoes of coal, acquired from the mining towns of the kingdom's northeast.²⁶ Lynn too benefited internationally from the wool trade in the fourteenth century during which time its merchants pioneered trading links as far afield as Iceland.²⁷ Norwich similarly relied upon river systems, the most important being the twenty-mile stretch down the rivers Yare and Wensum to Yarmouth, along which its merchants could carry their exportable produce.²⁸ Yarmouth, for its part, was heavily involved in the lucrative Gascon wine trade, maintained trading ties with the Low Countries, and had contacts in most of Europe's Atlantic and North Sea ports.²⁹

Despite their usefulness to one another, great rivalries prevailed between the merchants of these urban centres.³⁰ By the early fifteenth century, though, Norwich had firmly superseded its regional rivals.³¹ Yarmouth in particular had declined in stature. Fourth amongst provincial towns taxed in 1334, it had fallen to eighteenth by 1377, perhaps to some degree due to the demand of providing ships and victuals for English armies, but more so because of the decline of herring in the North Sea, and the strain placed upon its relations with its continental trading partners by the war with France.³² Both Yarmouth and Lynn suffered from the contraction of the wool trade and the growing supremacy of the *Hanse*, as did English wool merchants generally.³³ This was especially a problem for Lynn, since it was too geographically

²⁵ Hassell Smith, *County and Court*, p. 11.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages*, p. 327.

²⁸ Dunn, 'Trade', p. 225.

²⁹ Saul, 'Great Yarmouth', 105.

³⁰ Rutledge, 'Economic Life', pp. 184-5; Dunn, 'Trade', pp. 219-20, 225, 230.

³¹ D. M. Palliser, 'Urban Decay Revisited', *Towns and Townspeople in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. J. A. F. Thomson (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 9, 14.

³² Saul, 'Great Yarmouth', 105-15; Alban, 'English Coastal Defence', pp. 57-8, 66, 71; Palliser, 'Town Defences in Medieval England and Wales', pp. 105, 108-9, 116-17.

³³ For the national situation, see R. H. Britnell, *The Commercialisation of English Society 1000-1500* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 161-4.

isolated to profit from the cloth industries in southern Norfolk.³⁴ This was to some extent a short-term trend however. Although Yarmouth continued its decline,³⁵ Norwich and Lynn were counted amongst the ten wealthiest towns in England by the early sixteenth century.³⁶

The interplay between rural and urban society was pivotal to Norfolk's economic prosperity. Norfolk's economy was ultimately reliant upon access to the sea and upon mutual cooperation between the county's urban centres and rural society. The municipal elite of Norwich, Yarmouth and Lynn established close ties with nearby gentry landowners and a system of mutual interdependence and reciprocity flourished. Rural freeholders needed the merchant community to export their produce and the latter in turn relied upon the receipt of grain, corn, barley, cheese and so forth, to provide them with products worth selling. As such, in the potentially difficult economic times that followed the Black Death, during which landowners felt the effects of declining profits from demesne cultivation, the mercantile elite were prepared to offer up surplus capital to keep Norfolk's economy thriving.³⁷

The Church was likewise a powerful force in Norfolk society. There were fifty-six churches in Norwich alone,³⁸ and Norfolk's gentry generally cooperated with religious houses and institutions and accrued benefits from these relationships common to the epoch in which they lived. The Church offered a career path to the gentry's younger, bookish, or less able sons,³⁹ while nunneries were the perfect place

³⁴ Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages*, pp. 301-2; Dunn, 'Trade', p. 230.

³⁵ Yarmouth fell from being the sixth to being the twenty-first wealthiest town in England between 1334 and c.1524. Palliser, 'Urban Decay', p. 14.

³⁶ Norwich was ranked second and Lynn ninth in terms of wealth in c.1524. Palliser, 'Urban Decay', p. 14; see also Hassell Smith, *County and Court*, pp. 8-20.

³⁷ Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, p. 183.

³⁸ This represents the greatest number of survivals for any town in Europe. A. Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales 1300-1500: East Anglia, Central England, and Wales* (Cambridge, 2000), ii, p. 10; *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk*, ed. Wade-Martins, pp. 60-5.

³⁹ M. J. Bennett, 'Careerism in Late Medieval England', *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. J. Rosenthal and C. Richmond (Gloucester, 1987), pp. 26-9. M. J. Bennett, 'Education and Advancement', *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England*, ed. R. Horrox (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 79-96.

to house unmarried, widowed, or disobedient daughters.⁴⁰ A simple scan of the names of abbots, priors, rectors, friars and abbesses in leading houses across the county reveals the breadth of family connections between them and the secular gentry of the region.⁴¹ Moreover, in an age in which piety was widely upheld as a necessary virtue, the warrior class was prepared to expend considerable sums on the building of chantries and private chapels, on the employment of a household priest, and on donations to the Church on holy days and other festive occasions.⁴² The wills of Norfolk's knightly elite illustrate their pious intent, or for some their belated desire to repent their sins. Bequests were often left for the singing of masses to their memory, for the foundation of a family church or chantry, or for their interment in the finest religious houses in the county.⁴³

One must be wary, however, of painting too rosy a picture of life in Norfolk between 1350 and 1430. The Church, for instance, although for the most part a source of stability and cohesion in later medieval society, was on various occasions a cause of civil disorder in Norfolk. Successive bishops of Norwich were strong-willed and militant. The most illustrious of these dignitaries was Henry Despenser (1369-1406), fourth son of Hugh Despenser the younger. A charismatic figure, while in office he quarreled with the citizens of Norwich, Yarmouth and Lynn, launched stinging

⁴⁰ This is not to imply a lack of genuine devotion amongst late medieval English nuns. Numerous gentlewomen entered nunneries of their own volition. R. Gilchrist and M. Oliva, *Religious Women in Medieval East Anglia* (Norwich, 1993); M. Oliva, *The Convent and the Community in Late Medieval England: Female Monasteries in the Diocese of Norwich, 1350-1540* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 1-10.

⁴¹ Perhaps most famously, Katherine, niece of William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk, entered Bruisyard nunnery in Suffolk and eventually attained the rank of abbess. *CFR*, 1422-30, pp. 43-4. For examples of Norfolk gentlewomen who became nuns, see Gilchrist and Oliva, *Religious Women in Medieval East Anglia*; Oliva, *Convent and Community*, pp. 220-9.

⁴² C. Richmond, 'Religion and the Fifteenth-Century English Gentleman', *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. R. B. Dobson (Gloucester, 1984), pp. 193-208; C. Carpenter, 'The Religion of the Gentry of Fifteenth-Century England', *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. D. Williams (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 53-74.

⁴³ E.g. Sir Robert Berney (d. 1415) in his will made bequests to the churches of Alderford, Gunton and Witchingham. He left 20s to each of the house of friars in Norwich, and donated smaller sums to the hospitals of St. Paul's and St. Giles', as well as to the lepers of the city gates. Berney desired to be buried under the paving stones of St. Anne's chapel in Norwich Cathedral, near the graves of his parents. *NRO*, *NCC Reg.* Hyrning, f. 5; *Reg. Chichele*, iii, pp. 409-10.

attacks upon Lollardy, played the crucial role in quelling the Peasants' Revolt in Norfolk in 1381, and undertook a crusade in his own right to Flanders in 1383, which he personally led, accompanied by various East Anglian knights with whom he was on good terms.⁴⁴ It was, moreover, not only at the very top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy that churchmen of bellicose temper prevailed. Norfolk's religious houses were not backward in upholding their franchisal rights and taking their opponents to court when necessary.⁴⁵ Most famously, a dispute in Norwich in 1443 between the city's priory and its citizens reached the point where a crowd of about 100 people assembled and threatened to besiege and burn the priory.⁴⁶ Indeed, it is a measure of the senior clergy's regional influence that four abbots and nineteen priors were among the shire's worthies who in 1434 swore the oath against maintenance demanded by the minority council from the leading figures in the realm.⁴⁷

In this temperamental and litigious world, it is perhaps unsurprising that Norfolk's lawyers and administrators achieved a noteworthy contemporary reputation. In *The Canterbury Tales*, Geoffrey Chaucer designated his rapacious, bureaucratically-minded reeve as a Norfolk man,⁴⁸ and this regional stereotype was obviously well ingrained by the close of the Middle Ages. A handful of sixteenth-

⁴⁴ N. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich* (Toronto, 1984), pp. 144-54; A. E. Oliver, 'Battling Bishops: Late Fourteenth-Century Episcopal Masculinity Admired and Decried', *Medieval East Anglia*, ed. C. Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 272-86; *VCH Norfolk*, ii, p. 244; *The St Albans Chronicle: The 'Chronica maiora' of Thomas Walsingham, 1, 1376-1394*, ed. and tr. J. Taylor, W. R. Childs and L. Watkiss (Oxford, 2003), pp. 490-5. Hereafter, *The St Albans Chronicle*, ed. Taylor, Childs and Watkiss; J. Magee, 'Sir William Elmham and the Recruitment for Henry Despenser's Crusade of 1383', *Medieval Prosopography*, xx (1999), 181-190; K. DeVries, 'The Reasons for the Bishop of Norwich's Attack of Flanders in 1383', *Fourteenth-Century England III*, ed. W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 155-65.

⁴⁵ *VCH Norfolk*, ii, pp. 240-4; Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, pp. 144-54; Oliver, 'Battling Bishops', pp. 272-86; *The St Albans Chronicle*, ed. Taylor et. al., pp. 490-5.

⁴⁶ P. C. Maddern, 'Order and Disorder', *Medieval Norwich*, ed. C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (London, 2004), p. 198. For examples of similar petty violence breaking out at Lynn, see K. Parker, 'A Little Local Difficulty: Lynn and Lancastrian Usurpation', *Medieval East Anglia*, ed. C. Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 120-3. For plentiful examples of late medieval violence and disorder in East Anglia, see Maddern, *Violence and Social Order*.

⁴⁷ Additionally the Bishop of Norwich was one of the commissioners who oversaw the process. *CPR, 1429-1436*, p. 404.

⁴⁸ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, intro. D. Wright (Oxford, 1998), p. 16.

century monks of Bury St Edmunds prayed “That it may please Thee to preserve us from all Norfolk barrators”,⁴⁹ while an early seventeenth-century topographical writer claimed that “even the baser sort at the plough-tail will argue *pro et contra* cases in law” and added that their “cunning and subtiltie hath replenished the shire with more lawyers than any shire whatsoever”.⁵⁰ This latter point may not entirely have been a matter of popular hyperbole, for a bill was introduced to Parliament in 1589 stipulating that the number of attorneys in Norfolk should be limited to fourteen.⁵¹

The fact that the common folk felt aggrieved at the activities of the region’s numerous lesser gentry administrators is borne out in the events of the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381. Court rolls were burned and the homes of various estate officials were attacked.⁵² Edmund Gournay, a lawyer in the pay of John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, appears to have been especially singled out. Not only was his house set ablaze, he was quite literally forced to flee the county after the peasant mob put a bounty on his head.⁵³ Even more seriously, his fellow J.P., Reginald Eccles, was executed by his peasant captors.⁵⁴ That the knightly elite was not necessarily any better loved is revealed in the infamous treatment meted out to the unfortunate few seized by the rebels. Sir Robert Salle was murdered by the mob when he refused to join their cause, while his fellow veterans of the wars with France, the lords Morley and Scales, Sir John Brewes and Sir Stephen Hales, were humiliatingly forced to adopt the peasants’ demands and even wait at table on their captors.⁵⁵

It was, of course, not only from below that friction arose within Norfolk county society. While there was relatively little overt factionalism in the shire during the 1350 to 1430 period - at least none to match that described in the Paston Letters - disputes between prominent landowners naturally arose and could sometimes become distinctly violent. During the early fifteenth century, for example, Sir Thomas Kerdiston and Sir John Howard were in such flagrant dispute with each other that

⁴⁹ *The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond*, ed. H. E. Butler (London, 1949), p. 12.

⁵⁰ *The Chorography of Norfolk*, ed. C. M. Hood (Norwich, 1938), p. 68.

⁵¹ Hassell Smith, *County and Court*, p. 3.

⁵² Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 197-8.

⁵³ E. Powell, *The Rising in East Anglia in 1381* (Cambridge, 1896), pp. 135-6.

⁵⁴ *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk*, ed. Wade-Martins, pp. 86-7.

⁵⁵ Dobson, *The Peasants’ Revolt of 1381*, p. 258.

their squabble was brought to the attention of the royal council.⁵⁶ A generation earlier, another of the Howards, Sir Robert, petitioned the royal council complaining that Sir Thomas Morley and his colleagues were unjustly bringing him before an assize of oyer and terminer, laying the blame for these proceedings upon Sir Edmund Noon, whom Howard claimed had maliciously initiated the assize in retaliation following a land dispute between the two of them.⁵⁷ Around this time too, the Norfolk royal justice and Lancastrian steward, Edmund Clippesby, was murdered, after which a handful of local knights took the part of his widow against her deceased husband's enemies.⁵⁸ As a final example, Sir John Felton, heir to his father, and older brother of the better-known Sir Thomas Felton, was slain in apparent self-defence by Sir John Norwich in 1334.⁵⁹

Beyond petty disputes between individuals or families, the traditional knightly elite faced other, broader difficulties as well. Collectively they were the cream of Norfolk society, possessing substantial landed estates and bearing coat-armour that attested to their ancient gentility. The majority were also the purveyors of long-held family traditions of military service to the Crown. As the fourteenth century progressed, however, many of their number died out in the senior male line. This was in no small measure due to the effects of the Black Death, which arrived in East Anglia in March 1349, wrought destruction over the summer months, and died out by the autumn.⁶⁰ Norfolk's population at the time of the battle of Crécy in 1346 was perhaps twice that at the time of the relief of Orleans in 1429.⁶¹ While the plague naturally affected all ranks of society, in Norfolk - as everywhere else in the realm - a host of opportunities prevailed for survivors to improve their lot at the expense of the deceased and upward mobility, at least in the short term, became much more common than it had been in earlier decades. While a handful of Norfolk's ancient knightly families retained their pre-eminent positions throughout the period between 1350 and 1430, many of the knights and esquires we shall encounter in this study were men

⁵⁶ BL, Cotton Cal. D. iii. 159.

⁵⁷ TNA, SC8/183/9113.

⁵⁸ R. Virgoe, 'The Murder of Edmund Clippesby', *Norfolk Archaeology*, xxxv (1972), 302-7.

⁵⁹ Norwich was pardoned of the crime on 20 June 1334. *CP*, v, p. 292.

⁶⁰ Ziegler, *The Black Death*, p. 167.

⁶¹ Norwich, for instance, lost over half its population during the initial outbreak of 1349. *Ibid.*, pp. 169-70.

newly raised into the upper echelons of their county community through the successful careers of certain family members. Few were of common origin, but most had been middling or lesser gentry at the start of the fourteenth century, yet were indisputably members of the county's elite by the Lancastrian age.

This was also an era in which increasing numbers of esquires became armigerous, thereby undermining the distinctive social standing of the knight as a bearer of coat-armour and military traditions. By 1434 - excluding those upholding England's war effort in France - there were only eight Norfolk knights available to take the royal oath against maintenance, compared to 366 gentry of lesser rank, starkly illustrating that Norfolk's populous gentry was bottom-heavy.⁶² The problems facing the county's ancient families will be elucidated at length in later chapters. Suffice to say that although Norfolk was a large, populous and wealthy county, and was certainly relatively peaceable in comparison with the political upheavals of the fifteenth century,⁶³ tensions of all sorts simmered just below the surface and erupted intermittently, while the region's old armigerous families attempted to maintain their lifestyle and values in the face of the rapidly changing world of post-plague society.

This section has covered a variety of issues - landscape, economy, town and church life, and civil disorder - all against the backdrop of the Black Death and the numerous smaller plagues that followed in its wake. These topics have perforce been no more than glossed over by way of introduction. What may be gleaned from this thumbnail sketch of Norfolk between 1350 and 1430, however, is that the region had a more advanced economy, a more complex society, and a richer and more diverse culture than most. Scholars have highlighted the complexities of Norfolk's manorial structure and agrarian lifestyle, the relative freedom of its peasantry, the prosperity of its urban centres and the interplay between urban and rural society, and between the Church and lay society. These complexities must constantly be borne in mind in the following chapters as one considers the lifestyle, outlook and priorities of Norfolk's warrior gentry. Most of the county's knightly elite were involved in war and local

⁶² Two further Norfolk knights acted as commissioners. *CPR, 1429-1436*, p. 404.

⁶³ This is not to suggest that the county was without the lawlessness, violence and litigation typical of the age. See Maddern, *Violence and Social Order*. Moreover, general commissions of 'Oyer and Terminer' were ordered for the county in 1376 and 1387. *Rot. Parl.*, ii, pp. 374-5; *CPR, 1374-77*, p. 413; *CPR, 1385-89*, p. 388.

politics to varying degrees, but the farming of their estates, the preservation of their tenants, and the oiling of relations with towns and the Church, and with their fellow landlords - lay and ecclesiastical - may be considered the nitty-gritty of their daily lives.

Political Society, 1350-1399

Politically and socially, Norfolk society during the later fourteenth century was characterised by considerable gentry independence.⁶⁴ The Bigod earls of Norfolk and the Warenne earls of Surrey, who had been the preeminent lords in the region during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, had faltered through lack of male issue - the former in 1306, the latter as recently as 1347.⁶⁵ By the second half of the fourteenth century, therefore, although numerous magnates possessed a landed stake in the region, none owned sufficient estates to assert their dominance. During the Edwardian and Ricardian eras, East Anglia's foremost magnate landowners were the dukes of Lancaster, Henry of Grosmont and John of Gaunt; Edward the Black Prince; the Ufford and de la Pole earls of Suffolk; the Fitzalan earls of Arundel; the Mortimer earls of March; the de Vere earls of Oxford; and the Mowbray earls (from 1397 dukes) of Norfolk, headed for much of this period by Margaret of Brotherton, countess of Norfolk.⁶⁶ The three major baronial houses in the county were those of Bardolf, Morley and Scales. The Willoughbys of Eresby in Lincolnshire, and the Fitzwalters of Henham in Essex, also held various estates in the region, while the Feltons of Litcham and the Playses (nominally of Chelsworth in Suffolk) remained lesser barons until their extinction in the male line during the 1380s.⁶⁷

Of these lords, the dukes of Lancaster maintained the most significant territorial bloc in the county. At the time of his death in 1361, Henry of Grosmont held a variety of estates in northern and eastern Norfolk, principally the manors of

⁶⁴ Virgoe, 'The Crown and Local Government', pp. 225-7; Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, p. 182; Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 55-6.

⁶⁵ *CP*, ix, p. 596; xii (i), p. 511.

⁶⁶ Virgoe, 'The Crown and Local Government', pp. 225-7; Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 183-4; Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 55-7; R. E. Archer, 'The Estates and Finances of Margaret of Brotherton, c. 1320-1399', *BIHR*, lx (1987), 264-80.

⁶⁷ Virgoe, 'The Crown and Local Government', p. 227; *CP*, v, pp. 289-94, 472-87; x, pp. 539-42.

Beeston Regis, Gimingham, Methwold, Rodmere, Thetford and Tunstead, as well as the hundreds of Gallow and Brothercross.⁶⁸ These his uncle, Earl Thomas, had originally acquired for the house of Lancaster in 1319.⁶⁹ Upon Henry's death without male heir, his substantial patrimony passed to his daughter, Blanche, and consequently to her husband, Edward III's third son, John of Gaunt.⁷⁰ Gaunt already possessed a small interest in the county, centered on the manor of Swaffham, but his wife's inheritance suddenly made him the foremost landholder in Norfolk. Additionally, in 1372, he further expanded his holdings in the county by surrendering his earldom of Richmond, for which he received in compensation the Norfolk manors of Aylsham, Fakenham, Snettisham and Wighton, together with the hundreds of Erpingham, North Greenhoe and Smithdon.⁷¹ By the 1390s, Gaunt's Norfolk estates were valued at approximately £900 p.a.⁷²

For Norfolk's other magnate landholders, their estates in the county were less widespread, and their political weight was greater in other parts of the realm, where the bulk of their landed wealth was focused. The Norfolk estates of the earls of Arundel were valued at £200 p.a. at the time of Earl Richard's forfeiture in 1397.⁷³ Those of Edward the Black Prince, comprising merely the valuable lordship of Castle Rising and the profits of the tollbooth at Lynn, brought him just over £100 p.a.⁷⁴ The earls of March owed their position in East Anglia primarily to their possession of the prized honour of Clare in southwest Suffolk,⁷⁵ while the earls of Oxford, similarly, were strongest further south, in southern Suffolk and northern Essex.⁷⁶ For a time

⁶⁸ CCR, 1318-23, p. 68; Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 55.

⁶⁹ The estates in question were lost after Earl Thomas' execution in 1322 and were not regained until after the death of the last Earl Warenne in 1347. J. R. Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 234-7; K. Fowler, *The King's Lieutenant: Henry of Grosmont, First Duke of Lancaster, 1310-1361* (London, 1969), pp. 172-86.

⁷⁰ A. Goodman, *John of Gaunt: The Exercise of Princely Power in Fourteenth-Century Europe* (London, 1992), p. 33.

⁷¹ JGReg (1372-76), no. 34, p. 25; Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, p. 185.

⁷² TNA, DL43/15/4 m. 4.

⁷³ CIM, 1392-9, nos. 263, 269, 271, 274.

⁷⁴ P. H. W. Booth, *The Financial Administration of the Lordship and County of Chester 1272-1377* (Manchester, Chetham Society, 3rd Series, xxviii, 1981), p. 175.

⁷⁵ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 56.

⁷⁶ D. MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and Religion in an English County 1500-1600* (Oxford, 1986), p. 55.

during the 1370s, William Ufford, the second earl of Suffolk, looked a likely candidate to extend his influence across the region. He not only inherited his father's substantial Suffolk estates, which accompanied the earldom, but also his wife's share of the old Bigod inheritance, centered in eastern Suffolk and southeast Norfolk.⁷⁷ Upon his sudden death in 1382, however, the earldom was granted to the royal favourite, Michael de la Pole, while the bulk of the Bigod lands reverted to Earl William's sister-in-law, Margaret of Brotherton.⁷⁸ Her long life, lucrative marriages, and the premature deaths of her husbands, meant that by her old age, during the 1380s and 1390s, she had become the wealthiest landowner in Norfolk, receiving over £1,400 from her estates in 1394-5, and a combined annual return during the 1390s of almost £3,000.⁷⁹ Despite being strong-willed and a smooth operator, her wider political aspirations were limited, and her place as an elderly dowager left her unfortunate grandson, Thomas Mowbray, earl of Nottingham, waiting many long years for his East Anglian inheritance.⁸⁰

Of Norfolk's barons, the Lords Scales were resident at Middleton in west Norfolk and additionally possessed significant estates in Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire.⁸¹ The wealthy Willoughbys and Fitzwalters - who shall remain only peripheral to this study - essentially hailed from Lincolnshire and Essex respectively and their Norfolk lands were part of substantial patrimonies that stretched across several counties.⁸² The Bardolfs, like the Scales', were powerful in Norfolk's west, their principal seat situated at Wormegay,⁸³ while the Morleys were resident at

⁷⁷ *CIPM*, xii, no. 424; Virgoe, 'The Crown and Local Government', p. 225; Castor, *The King, the Crown and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 60. See Chapter Four for further details.

⁷⁸ *CP*, ix, pp. 599-600.

⁷⁹ R. E. Archer, 'Rich Old Ladies: The Problem of Late Medieval Dowagers', *Property and Politics: Essays in Later Medieval English History*, ed. A. R. Pollard (Gloucester, 1984), pp. 28-31; Archer, 'The Estates and Finances of Margaret of Brotherton', 265-72.

⁸⁰ *CPR, 1399-1401*, p. 28; Archer, 'Rich Old Ladies', p. 29.

⁸¹ *CP*, xi, p. 504.

⁸² William, fifth Lord Willoughby, for instance, was granted some of the lands of the banished Thomas Mowbray, duke of Norfolk, in September 1399. *CPR, 1396-9*, p. 590. For the Willoughbys' Norfolk connections, see Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, p. 186, n. 27; for the Fitzwalters' principal Norfolk manors, see Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, pp. 8-9.

⁸³ *CP*, i, pp. 417-21.

Morley, near Wymondham in east-central Norfolk, at Hingham, which lay just northwest of there, and at Reydon.⁸⁴ The Feltons lived at Litcham, north of the Morleys' home at Hingham, while the Playses maintained estates scattered throughout East Anglia.⁸⁵ These barons, despite their wealth and prestige, to some extent found themselves in a socially precarious position. They were peers of the realm who sat in the House of Lords by personal hereditary right, were summoned to noble councils, led sizeable retinues on overseas military expeditions, socialised and intermarried with their fellow barons, and were at times called upon to act as witnesses and feoffees for greater lords. As members of the nobility, they were expected to live the lifestyle of a peer, not that of a 'mere' knight.⁸⁶ Yet within the domestic confines of Norfolk county society, there was precious little difference between them and the county's knightly elite. They were in essence clinging to the bottom rung of the peerage. This was especially so for the Feltons and Playses, who were referred to sometimes interchangeably as 'knight' or 'lord' in contemporary sources. Indeed, Sir Hamo Felton, supposedly Lord Felton, represented Norfolk as an M.P. in the House of Commons in 1376-7.⁸⁷

Reinforcing the similarities between baron and knight in the county context, a host of other Norfolk knightly families dipped in and out of the peerage between 1350 and 1430. Sir John Norwich, whose father had been Baron of the Exchequer, and who had married the sister of Robert Ufford, earl of Suffolk, became Lord Norwich late in life in 1360, two years before his death. The barony lasted only thirteen years, ending with his grandson's death in 1373.⁸⁸ Similarly, Roger Kerdiston of Repham (d. 1337), chief justice of the King's Bench, was summoned to Parliament as Lord Kerdiston in 1331-2, yet the family fell from the peerage in 1361 with the death of Roger's son, Sir

⁸⁴ Ibid., ix, p. 209.

⁸⁵ Ibid., v, pp. 289-94; x, pp. 539-42.

⁸⁶ To cite the Morleys as an example, they were connected by marriage to the Lords Marshal, the Lords Bardolf, and the earls of Suffolk. Thomas, fourth Lord Morley, by way of further example, was a friend of Thomas of Woodstock, duke of Gloucester, and later sat on the regent's council of John, duke of Bedford. *CFR*, 1307-19, p. 308; *CPR*, 1343-5, p. 432; *CPR*, 1416-22, p. 265; A. Goodman, *The Loyal Conspiracy* (London, 1971), pp. 101-2; *CP*, ix, p. 217.

⁸⁷ H. Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists* (Norwich, 1890), p. 44. This appears to have been a single individual, although there may have been two Hamo Feltons - one a baron, the other a knight.

⁸⁸ *CP*, ix, pp. 762-6.

William Kerdiston II, who, like Hamo Felton, was more often described as a knight. His son, William III, would go on to represent Norfolk in the House of Commons.⁸⁹ In the same vein, Sir John Clifton of Buckenham became Lord Clifton in 1376, yet his grandson, a minor in 1395, was never afforded the same privilege.⁹⁰

Part of the reason for this fluctuation between baronial and knightly rank was that baronies were often granted to individual knights as reward for their services to the Crown. Sir Robert Felton, after years of military action and garrison duty in France and Scotland, had become the first Lord Felton in 1313, while Sir Roger Kerdiston and Sir John Norwich may equally be understood as having received promotions towards the end of their careers.⁹¹ In the same vein, Sir Robert Benhale, who had distinguished himself in Edward III's military campaigns during the preceding thirty years, was made Lord Benhale in the year of his death in 1360, and, although acquired by inheritance, Sir Miles Stapelton of Bedale (Yorks.) and Sir William Phelip of Dennington (Suff.) became Norfolk barons whilst undertaking profitable careers in royal service, by marrying respectively the heiresses of Oliver Lord Ingham (d. 1349) and Thomas Lord Bardolf (d. 1408).⁹² Put simply, what separated the Morleys, Bardolfs and Scales from these other families was that they remained definitively peers of the realm from generation to generation. They were not necessarily a great deal wealthier than some of Norfolk's more prosperous knights, and they lacked the wherewithal to construct affinities comparable with the region's magnate landholders, yet they were indisputably, at a social level, the three most important resident families in Norfolk, who, as we shall see, interacted extensively with the knightly elite, yet also maintained magnate connections that more closely resembled horizontal than vertical ties.

In sum, one may say that the patterns of lordship adopted by Norfolk's regional nobility were broadly similar and reflected both their comparatively minimal landed presence in the county and the fact that their Norfolk estates were merely part of wider patrimonies. The nobility retained legal advisors and estates officials from

⁸⁹ Ibid., vii, pp. 191-3; Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, p. 44.

⁹⁰ CP, iii, pp. 307-8.

⁹¹ Ibid., v, pp. 289-90; vii, pp. 191-3; ix, pp. 763-5.

⁹² Ibid., ii, pp. 115-16; vii, pp. 61-3; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 74.

amongst the county's middling and lesser gentry and often actively sought the services of leading knights and esquires in war and peace.⁹³ For the most part their interests in the county extended no further than the farming of their estates and the acquisition of useful employees.⁹⁴ Moreover, they cooperated with one another when needs be (especially in mundane matters relating to the administration of their landholdings), and a certain oiling of relations evidently took place on occasions.⁹⁵ Collectively then, the county's numerous magnate landholders attracted the gentry into their employ, thereby providing the necessary leadership for the county and reflecting the fact that they lived in an era in which service to one's superiors had become an ingrained social convention.⁹⁶

Political Society, 1399-1430

The Lancastrian usurpation of the throne in 1399 coincided with a magnate power vacuum in East Anglia. As fate would have it, virtually all of Norfolk's noble landowners experienced either extinction for want of male issue, or minority crises, during the decades straddling this sweeping dynastic overhaul. Richard Fitzalan, the fourth earl of Arundel, had forfeited his estates during Richard II's reprisals against the Lords Appellant in 1397.⁹⁷ Similarly, Michael, the second de la Pole earl of Suffolk, had seen his father impeached by the Appellants in 1387 and forced into exile, and it had taken him five years to retrieve his estates and eleven to regain the earldom of Suffolk. He unsurprisingly kept a low political profile, despite his substantial inheritance on both sides of the Norfolk-Suffolk border.⁹⁸ Thomas Mowbray, earl of Nottingham, finally inherited his lucrative East Anglian patrimony in March 1399 upon the death of his grandmother, Margaret of Brotherton; yet by this time he was already in exile after his banishment by Richard II, and he died abroad in the following September, leaving his fifteen-year old son, Thomas, as his heir.⁹⁹ The

⁹³ For a fuller discussion of lordship in the county, see Chapter Four.

⁹⁴ The dukes of Norfolk and earls of Suffolk were exceptions in this regard, since their landed wealth was much more firmly centred in East Anglia. See Chapter Four.

⁹⁵ See Chapter Four for examples.

⁹⁶ R. Horrox, 'Service', *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England*, ed. R. Horrox (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 61-78.

⁹⁷ A. Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility* (New York, 1974), pp. 188-91.

⁹⁸ CP, xii (i), pp. 439-41; Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 83-4.

⁹⁹ Tuck, *Richard II*, pp. 209, 219; CP, ix, p. 603.

latter became involved in Archbishop Scrope's rebellion in 1405 and was subsequently executed, whereupon his thirteen-year old younger brother, John, succeeded him, engendering another minority crisis for the house of Mowbray. Thomas, fifth Lord Bardolf, also joined Scrope's revolt, forfeiting his family's ancient patrimony at Wormegay, and dying from his wounds following the battle of Bramham Moor in 1408.¹⁰⁰ Compounding this regional ill fortune, the earl of March died in 1398, the earl of Oxford in 1400, and the Lord Scales in 1402 - all leaving minor heirs.¹⁰¹ Thus, for most of Henry IV's reign, there was almost a complete dearth of traditional noble influence in Norfolk, while Henry, in his capacity as duke of Lancaster, naturally found himself unable to devote much direct attention to the supervision of his vast ducal estates, given the insecurity of his early years on the throne and, more generally, the preoccupations of kingship.¹⁰²

In this light, the early years of Lancastrian rule witnessed something of a re-ordering of the power structures of Norfolk society. Leadership of the county was initially undertaken by a royal favourite, Sir Thomas Erpingham, the heir to a middling knightly family from Norfolk's northeast, who had first risen to prominence as a military retainer of John of Gaunt in the 1380s. He had transferred into the household of Henry of Bolingbroke around 1390 and had served with the latter on Crusade in Prussia, becoming one of his closest companions and accompanying him into exile in 1398.¹⁰³ Under the new regime, Erpingham was immediately rewarded for his loyalty with a variety of lucrative royal offices and a position on the privy council.¹⁰⁴ His proximity to the new sovereign naturally made him the focal point for his fellow gentry in Norfolk and an informal friendship network developed around him, largely monopolising county office and engendering a strong measure of

¹⁰⁰ *CP*, ix, pp. 604-5; *CP*, i, pp. 419-20; J. L. Kirby, *Henry IV of England* (London, 1970), pp. 185-7; Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 60-1.

¹⁰¹ *CP*, viii, p. 450; x, pp. 233-4; xi, p. 504; Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 60.

¹⁰² Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 3-21, 25-31.

¹⁰³ For Erpingham's career, see John, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', 96-108; A. Curry, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', *Agincourt 1415: Henry V, Sir Thomas Erpingham and the Triumph of the English Archers*, ed. A. Curry (Stroud, 2000), pp. 53-77; S. K. Walker, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', *ODNB*, xviii, pp. 512-14.

¹⁰⁴ Curry, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', pp. 62-4; John, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', 96.

political stability in the shire.¹⁰⁵ Despite the bevy of grants and gifts that flowed his way, which made him one of the wealthiest knights in the realm, Erpingham's income nonetheless failed to match those of the kingdom's magnates, whose lordship represented the traditional form of leadership in county society. As such, his influence rested primarily upon his court connections, and while his friendship was clearly sought, he lacked the financial means to distribute largesse and develop a formidable, vertically integrated, following in his native county.¹⁰⁶

A more likely leader of Norfolk society appeared during the early years of the reign in the form of the new king's half-brother, Thomas Beaufort - the recently legitimized son of John of Gaunt. Having been a bastard until the final months of his father's life, Beaufort had received a comparatively paltry inheritance, Gaunt leaving him 1,000 marks in cash, but lands worth only £17.¹⁰⁷ His only Norfolk holding at the outset of the reign was Castle Acre.¹⁰⁸ In 1405, however, King Henry granted him the Bardolfs' forfeited patrimony at Wormegay. This move turned Beaufort overnight into the foremost adult, male landowner in the county (besides King Henry himself), in possession of a significant territorial stake concentrated in west Norfolk.¹⁰⁹ In the years that followed, Beaufort and Erpingham jointly exerted considerable influence throughout the region, named together on Norfolk's peace commissions from 1406,¹¹⁰ and entrusted on numerous occasions to oversee justice and arbitrate in local disputes in the name of their sovereign.¹¹¹ Various gentry, strongly associated with Erpingham, entered Beaufort's service or enjoyed his patronage during these years, including Erpingham's nephew and heir, Sir William Phelip, who, as we have seen, obtained a lucrative marriage to Joan, daughter and co-heiress of the disinherited Thomas Lord

¹⁰⁵ See Chapter Three.

¹⁰⁶ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 68; Erpingham was nonetheless regularly entrusted to dispense justice and arbitrate in local disputes, for example between the town of King's Lynn and the Bishop of Norwich. *CPR, 1401-5*, p. 274; *Calendar of Signet Letters of Henry IV and Henry V (1399-1422)*, ed. J. L. Kirby (London, 1978), p. 189.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*; G. L. Harriss, *Cardinal Beaufort* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 6-7; *CFR, 1413-22*, pp. 22-3.

¹⁰⁸ Castle Acre had been forfeited by Richard, earl of Arundel, and had subsequently been granted to Beaufort by Richard II. *CPR, 1396-9*, p. 414.

¹⁰⁹ *CFR, 1399-1405*, p. 316; *CPR, 1405-8*, p. 105.

¹¹⁰ *CPR, 1405-8*, p. 494.

¹¹¹ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 69.

Bardolf. This match subsequently made Phelip the official heir to both Erpingham and Beaufort and eventually saw him raised to the peerage as Lord Bardolf in 1437.¹¹² Between them, therefore, Thomas Erpingham and Thomas Beaufort formed an effective leadership of Norfolk society from the latter half of Henry IV's reign until their deaths in the late 1420s, developing ties, formal and informal, with the greater gentry, and using their positions at court to buttress their authority in place of the traditional magnate families of the region.

Despite the fact that the duke of Lancaster was now also the king, the clique that developed around Erpingham and Beaufort should not be perceived as an extension of the Lancastrian affinity, but rather as representative of a wider regional adherence to the new royal dynasty.¹¹³ Under Henry V's rule, this loyalty became increasingly broad-based and unrelated to the duchy lands themselves. Henry had been raised as Prince of Wales, and thus his major Norfolk estate was that of Castle Rising in the county's west - a traditional seat of the heir presumptive to the throne, formerly held by Edward the Black Prince. During the later years of his father's reign, Henry had cultivated widespread connections with Norfolk's gentry, including Erpingham¹¹⁴ and many of the latter's associates,¹¹⁵ while his lordship of Castle Rising lay in the heartland of Beaufort's power base in west Norfolk and strengthened the already pre-existing bond between nephew and uncle.¹¹⁶ At the same time, Beaufort's prestige had been heightened in 1412 by his receipt of the earldom of Dorset and was to be further enhanced four years later when Henry (by now king)

¹¹² *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, pp. 71-4.

¹¹³ A view forcefully propounded by Helen Castor. Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 73.

¹¹⁴ E.g. Erpingham received substantial money grants from Prince Henry, to whom he had surrendered the constablership of Dover Castle and the wardenship of the Cinque Ports. After Henry's accession to the throne, Erpingham was appointed steward of the royal household. *CPR, 1408-13*, p. 57; *CPR, 1413-16*, p. 120.

¹¹⁵ These men included, Sir John Phelip, John Wodehouse, John Winter and John Spenser. Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 71. Several of Henry's princely connections within the county were reinforced after he ascended the throne. For example, Winter was appointed steward of the Lancastrian lands in East Anglia, while Wodehouse became chancellor of the Duchy and in 1415 succeeded Winter as steward, after the latter's death. R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster* (London, 1953), i, pp. 389, 594; TNA, DL42/17 f. 38.

¹¹⁶ Harriss, *Cardinal Beaufort*, pp. 16, 43-67; P. McNiven, 'Prince Henry and the English Political Crisis of 1412', *History*, lxxv (1980), 1.

made him duke of Exeter. During Henry V's reign, therefore, the Norfolk gentry became increasingly united behind their sovereign, whose lordship in the region was overtly royal and whose private patrimony no longer entirely matched the traditional duchy lands of John of Gaunt.

Simultaneously, although the minority crises that had afflicted East Anglia's magnates were abating by the 1410s, any potential power struggle in the region was effectively put on hold by Henry V's wars with France. Michael, second de la Pole earl of Suffolk, perished at Harfleur and his eponymous heir died within days at Agincourt. William, the second earl's younger son, who had participated as a minor on this expedition, became a committed captain during the conquest of Normandy after 1417. Equally committed to the war was John, second Mowbray duke of Norfolk, who had obtained his majority in 1413. The same was true of the young lords Scales, Morley, Willoughby and Fitzwalter.¹¹⁷ The instability known to have plagued Norfolk after 1430, vividly brought to life in the Paston Letters (and which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven), sprang from a combination of events occurring after Henry V's death. Firstly, England was faced with a child king, while a lack of royal leadership remained a continuous problem even after the young Henry VI had begun to rule in his own right from 1437.¹¹⁸ Secondly, as the tide of the French war gradually turned against the English, the warrior nobility of East Anglia, who had spent the best part of the 1410s and 1420s abroad, now returned home to the political world of the shire.¹¹⁹ Most significantly, Thomas Beaufort died childless in 1426, as did Thomas Erpingham two years later.¹²⁰ This once again left a power vacuum in the region, which William Phelip proved unable to fill (despite inheriting a significant proportion of the estates of both Beaufort and Erpingham), and the leadership of the county thus became a prize fought over between William, fourth de la Pole earl of Suffolk, and John, third Mowbray duke of Norfolk, with the former

¹¹⁷ *CP*, xii (i), p. 443; *CCR*, 1409-13, pp. 390-1; *CFR*, 1422-30, pp. 114-15; *CP*, v, pp. 482-3.

¹¹⁸ Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship*, pp. 91-122, 251-4.

¹¹⁹ See Chapter Seven.

¹²⁰ *CP*, v, p. 205; Walker, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', *ODNB*, xviii, p. 513.

winning out and establishing what one veteran scholar has described as “a mafia in East Anglia”.¹²¹

The Norfolk Gentry

Norfolk gentry society was remarkably fluid in its composition during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.¹²² One of the foremost authorities on the county, Roger Virgoe, suggested that there existed a three-tier division of Norfolk’s gentry into barons, the knightly elite, and lawyer-administrators.¹²³ Certainly when considering the upper echelons of the county community, comprising major landowners, public office holders, leading magnate servants, and renowned careerists, this division appears more than appropriate.

As has already been elucidated, it was the last of these three categories, the lawyer-administrators, who garnered the greatest attention from contemporary and near-contemporary writers. The popular reputation of Norfolk’s legally-trained bureaucrats as experts in their field was clearly well deserved. Several royal justices hailed from the county during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, most notably Robert Clere and William Witchingham at the start of our period, and William Paston and William Yelverton at its end.¹²⁴ These judges, however, were merely Norfolk’s most outstanding men of the law. Behind them were arrayed a host of talented individuals who carved out flourishing careers for themselves as county officials and magnate administrators. The most successful of them, men who raised their families into the front-rank of Norfolk society for much of the 1350 to 1430 period, included the Black Prince’s Norfolk steward, John Berney, and his counterparts, Edmund Gourney and Edmund Clippesby, who jointly administered the Lancastrian estates of John of Gaunt during the 1370s and 1380s.¹²⁵ In the wake of the usurpation of 1399

¹²¹ C. Richmond, ‘East Anglian Politics and Society in the Fifteenth Century: Reflections 1956-2003’, *Medieval East Anglia*, ed. C. Harper-Bill (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 185.

¹²² For career summaries of those Norfolk knights and esquires who regularly feature in this thesis, see Appendix I.

¹²³ Virgoe, ‘The Crown and Local Government’, pp. 227-8.

¹²⁴ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, pp. 581-2; Richmond, *The Paston Family: The First Phase*, pp. 1-2, 17-18.

¹²⁵ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, p. 208; Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 191-3.

too, those bureaucrats serving the Crown-Duchy interest, most prominently Edmund Oldhall, John Wodehouse, John Heydon, Thomas Derham, and the Winters of Town Barningham, became figures of considerable status within the county.¹²⁶ Additionally one cannot ignore leading urban families who, although not central to this study, were influential in their own right. Some who held city offices on a regular basis included the Wesenhams, Drews, Botkeshams, and Waterdens at King's Lynn; the Roses, Ellis', atte Fenns, and Fastolfs at Great Yarmouth; and the Appleyards, Bixtons and Dunstans at Norwich.¹²⁷

Through the successful careers of the county's lawyers, merchants and bureaucrats, Norfolk's reputation for litigiousness and commerce was thoroughly established. The power these gentry wielded came to be resented in some quarters, however, and the distrust felt for Norfolk's lawyer-administrators in particular was not limited to the sixteenth century. It was after all men of this stamp who kept the bureaucratic wheels of the county turning and made certain that taxes were collected, fines were accounted for, and debts were repaid in full. Unsurprisingly, with tasks of this nature to perform, these petty officials to manorial lords became distinctly unpopular with their employers' tenants, with animosity, as we have seen, reaching its zenith during the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.¹²⁸

Despite the notoriety gained by local lawyers and bureaucrats, most of Norfolk's elite belonged to the established armigerous landowning class that traditionally ruled regional society at the county and parish level. Knights and esquires increasingly held county offices over the course of the fourteenth century, and many rose in magnate service not only as soldiers, but also on the back of their skills as administrators, councillors and diplomats.¹²⁹ Their overall number may be loosely gauged from the four rolls introduced in the previous chapter. Sixty Norfolk knights were named upon the Parliamentary Roll of 1308.¹³⁰ At the military council of 1324, their number had risen to seventy-eight, buttressed by ninety-one 'armed'

¹²⁶ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 62-3, 66, 71-2, 77.

¹²⁷ *Rot. Parl.*, iii, p. 123b; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, i, pp. 512-29; iii, pp. 55-9; *Foedera*, III, ii, p. 925.

¹²⁸ See pp. 38-9.

¹²⁹ See Chapter Four.

¹³⁰ *Parl. Writs.*, i, p. 415.

esquires. In total, therefore, the military strength of Norfolk's knights and esquires combined in 1324 was considered by the Crown to comprise 169 men-at-arms.¹³¹ Obviously these lists are not entirely comprehensive. Not every knight would have attended the parliament of 1308, while the old, infirm, or those otherwise unavailable, would not have been summoned to the 1324 council. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that, as a general trend, the number of knights in England declined over the course of the 1350 to 1430 period, as the Black Death cut a swathe through the population and fewer men accepted the burdens of knighthood.¹³² One may therefore assume, and indeed those names provided on the 1308 and 1324 lists reveal,¹³³ that various families who were of knightly status during the reigns of the first two Edwards had fallen back into the squirearchy by the Lancastrian age.¹³⁴ As is well known though, the line between knight and esquire became increasingly blurred as the fourteenth century progressed, during which time many of the latter acquired armorial bearings, well deserved by virtue of their deeds in arms in the king's wars.¹³⁵ Since this is a military study, these men may jointly be described as armigerous men-at-arms, since some family members accepted knighthood, while others refused it, yet the majority lived broadly similar lives as soldiers, landowners, and local administrators.

The figure of around sixty knights and ninety esquires from the early years of the fourteenth century is reinforced when one considers the Norfolk and Suffolk Roll of Arms of c. 1400, where 150 heraldic devices are depicted.¹³⁶ This was a commemorative roll, which included a few nobles and knights whose Norfolk connections were tenuous, as well as the names of various families who were extinct. We know from the Erpingham Window that eighty-two knightly lines lapsed for want

¹³¹ Ibid., ii, ii, pp. 641-3.

¹³² Mark Bailey has recently estimated that there were perhaps thirty knights resident in Suffolk in c.1300, compared to almost 100 knights a century earlier. Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, pp. 11-12. See also, Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility*, pp. 69-83; Ayton, 'English Armies in the Fourteenth Century', p. 312.

¹³³ See Chapter Six for details of the Erpingham Window.

¹³⁴ E.g. Oliver Groos esq., who rose to prominence in Lancastrian service, hailed from a long line of knights, but was himself never dubbed. *House of Commons*, iii, pp. 250-2.

¹³⁵ Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*, pp. 71-86.

¹³⁶ Oxford: Queen's College, MS. 158, pp. 295-304.

of male issue in Norfolk and Suffolk between 1327 and 1419.¹³⁷ Offsetting this decline was the rise of new men, of whom numerous examples existed amongst Norfolk's gentry in the Ricardian and Lancastrian ages, so it appears unlikely that Norfolk's armigerous landowning class decreased appreciably in size over these years.¹³⁸ This, though, is not to imply that the majority of these knights and esquires undertook war service. Military participation is a separate matter altogether, distinct from the numbers of *potential* men-at-arms living in the county. Nonetheless, it may be suggested that, whilst accepting a certain degree of fluctuation, Norfolk's armigerous class, encompassing individuals as varied as great knights and lowly parish esquires, would have ranged in size from perhaps 100 to 180 families over the course of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. This was the pool of men from which Norfolk's gentry military participants was drawn. As for the county elite - the greater gentry (both soldiers and civilians) in Norfolk society - they would have numbered roughly thirty to fifty families at any one time, and essentially comprised the county's regular holders of major public offices, the region's wealthiest landowners, as well as those men who achieved high-ranking positions through service to the Crown and nobility.¹³⁹

For a military study such as this, numerical precision regarding the size of Norfolk's county elite, or indeed of its military community, would prove anomalous. As has already been touched upon in the previous chapter, the patchiness of military records - derived from pay accounts for campaigns, letters of protection and attorney, heraldic rolls, pardons for war service, and testimony before the Court of Chivalry - does not lend itself to a quantitative analysis of the county's military strength. To reiterate, our *dramatis personae* will comprise a variety of armigerous individuals and families who carved out long careers in arms for themselves. Those lesser gentry soldiers who spoke before the Court of Chivalry will represent our sample of the lower echelons of East Anglian military society.

¹³⁷ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, iv, pp. 86-8.

¹³⁸ For gentry careerism within Norfolk see Chapters Three and Four.

¹³⁹ By way of comparison with neighbouring Suffolk, it has been estimated that fewer than fifty gentry families effectively ran local government in the latter county. Bailey, *Medieval Suffolk*, p. 259. Norfolk's governing elite may have been slightly larger, but not by much, and there is to be found a steady stream of the same individuals and families holding local office in the county between 1350 and 1430. See Chapter Three.

At its upper reaches, it will become clear that Norfolk's most prominent knights and esquires hailed from a variety of backgrounds. Firstly, there were ancient families, long established amongst the county elite, such as the Lords Morley, Bardolf, and Scales, and the knightly families of Felton, Plays, Norwich, Kerdiston, Mortimer, Clifton, Shelton, Ingoldesthorpe, Howard and Thorpe. These families had all been at the forefront of Norfolk society since at least the reign of Edward I, and each included family members active on the military campaigns of the 1340s and 1350s, while the descendants of these knights continued to serve in the king's wars. There were other families too, who were of good repute and middling rank, yet who rose to the apex of county society through the successful careers of individual family members during our period. These career men included Sir Richard Walkefare, Sir George and Sir Simon Felbrigg, Sir Thomas Gerbergh, Sir Edmund Noon, Sir Thomas Erpingham, Sir John White, Oliver Groos, John Reymes, William Rees, John Lancaster II, Sir Henry Inglose and Sir Robert Harling. Sometimes too, successful administrators or lawyers could found family lines that would see their children enter the knightly elite. This was the case for the Berneys, Oldhalls, Pastons, and Knyvetts. Some of our principal players also hailed from rather more obscure backgrounds, from urban centres, or from lesser gentry or common stock. Outstanding careerists of this sort included Sir Robert Benhale, Sir Stephen Hales, Sir Robert Salle, Sir Thomas Morieux, Sir William Elmham, Sir Nicholas Dagworth and Sir John Fastolf.

A few families became members of the county elite through marriage or land purchase. These included the Stapeltons of Yorkshire, the Knyvetts of Northamptonshire, the Phelips of Suffolk, and the Radcliffes of Lancashire. Cadet branches of baronial families from other counties also settled in Norfolk. Foremost amongst them were the Stranges of Hunstanton, the Hastings of Elsing, and the Breweses of Stinton, while younger siblings of the Ufford earls of Suffolk and the Lords Morley, Bardolf and Scales likewise began cadet lines in the county. Other knightly families from the region who carried social and political weight, yet are less central to our narrative, include the Geneys, Carbonells, Chamberlains, Hemenhales, Mautebys, Calthorpes, Waldegraves, Mountefords, and Boutetourts. In sum, lawyers and professional bureaucrats aside, what all of these families had in common was armigerous status and, almost without exception, service in the king's wars, and it is

primarily because they were leading figures in both Norfolk's county community and military community that they may be considered the protagonists of this thesis.

Norfolk's county elite was liberally distributed across the shire, possessing multiple estates in various regions of the county. As such it can become rather difficult to pinpoint precisely where they lived, for many would have been on the move at least part of the year.¹⁴⁰ As wealthy landlords, with substantial estates and significant numbers of tenants, they naturally did not live cheek by jowl with one another, yet certain clusters of great families may usefully be identified as living in particular parts of the county. The Lords Morley lived to the west of Norwich at Hingham, while families resident in their vicinity, or further to the south and southwest of the capital, included the Mortimers, Cliftons, Thorpes, Sheltons, Harlings, and Ingloses. The Kerdistons held land at Claxton and Repham, south and northwest of Norwich respectively, and only a few miles from them lived the Hastings of Elsing. Northeast Norfolk was home to several families destined for Lancastrian service under John of Gaunt and Henry of Bolingbroke, including the Erpinghams, Berneys, Grooses, Whites and Reymeses, as well as the Felbriggs and Stapeltons, who were not ostensibly followers of the dukes of Lancaster. Along the east coast were families with Yarmouth connections, the Fastolfs and Cleres, while the Pastons were another coastal family who rose to prominence later in our period. Finally, the county's west was home to the Lords Scales and Bardolf, as well as to a variety of other established knightly families, including the Feltons, Ingoldesthorpes, Howards, and Noons. Those *parvenus* who rose into Norfolk's elite in this epoch through land purchase, marriage, or careerism, like Sir Nicholas Dagworth, Sir Stephen Hales, Sir William Elmham, Sir Robert Salle, Sir John Fastolf and Sir John Radcliffe, were liberally scattered throughout the region. This thumbnail sketch is far from an all-encompassing depiction of how Norfolk's elite was distributed across the shire. Importantly though, it emphasises the self-evident point that every corner of the county contained a few families who were quite clearly the elite of their particular locality, and whose contacts and horizons stretched well beyond the area immediately surrounding their principal residence.

¹⁴⁰ What follows regarding the geographical distribution of Norfolk's county elite is surmised from Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, 11 vols.

NORFOLK



Conclusion

Norfolk society between 1350 and 1430 was comparatively stable and cohesive, at least in comparison with the later Paston age and the Wars of the Roses.¹⁴¹ Its gentry achieved a considerable measure of independence, partly due to the county's wealth, its varied economy, and its diffuse tenurial patterns, but also because numerous magnates maintained estates in the region without a single lord ever becoming pre-eminent. Strong economic and social ties linked Norfolk's urban communities, principally those at Norwich, Yarmouth, and Lynn, to the nearby landowning gentry, while the Church was naturally influential during this era, representing an outlet for gentry piety and collectively acting as a significant possessor of landed wealth in the shire. The Revolution of 1399 proved no great watershed for Norfolk society. The county's gentry largely supported the Lancastrian usurpation and by the reign of Henry V many of its leading families were actively associated with the new royal dynasty as local estate officials, as courtiers, or in the wars with France. A more detailed analysis of the Norfolk warrior gentry's relations with each other, with their civilian counterparts, and with the regional nobility, will form the basis of the following two chapters, before one turns directly to examine the extent of the county's contribution to the Hundred Years War and the character of its 'military community'.

¹⁴¹ See Chapter Seven.

THE WARRIOR GENTRY AND THE COUNTY COMMUNITY

Most county histories, as outlined in Chapter One, draw no particular distinction between their militarily-active and their civilian gentry. Moreover, several distinguished scholars have argued with good reason that England's more warlike counties, such as Cheshire, naturally bred warlike inhabitants.¹ Norfolk's county community, as we have just seen, was relatively socially and politically cohesive between 1350 and 1430, at least in comparison with later decades. What will be suggested in this chapter and the next is that it was this relatively peaceable climate that enabled the warrior gentry to balance effectively their martial vocation and their local, domestic concerns within the shire. Norfolk's prosperous county community provided the framework that indirectly facilitated the participation of its warrior gentry in the king's wars. Norfolk's armigerous class was relatively wealthy and could thus better afford the weapons, armour and steeds necessary for regular military service. At the same time, living in a region largely bereft of overt factionalism, the warrior gentry could take out their letters of protection and go to war with far less anxiety for their property than many of their brethren from other parts of the realm.

Since the greater gentry were the leaders of their shire, and since the military elite was drawn from amongst the greater gentry, an appreciation of how Norfolk's militarily-active families interacted with each other and with the civilian gentry of the county provides a necessary starting point before examining the county's 'military community' itself in later chapters. This task will be undertaken using examples in the first section and an analysis of two regional knightly social circles thereafter. The place of the warrior gentry within their county community, the role they played as political leaders in their shire, the extent to which a crude class-consciousness prevailed amongst them, and the choices they faced in striking a balance between their military vocation and their domestic interests, will comprise the core issues investigated below.

¹ See Chapter One.

The County Elite

Those individuals and families who may broadly be considered the protagonists of this thesis have already been introduced in the previous chapter. Given that most of the warriors we shall encounter in this study were of knightly rank, or were wealthier esquires, it is worth beginning with a broad sketch of what these leading families had in common, before homing in upon their local social networks later in the chapter. This approach is particularly useful because the behaviour, attitudes and priorities of the local elite to a significant degree determined the character of Norfolk's county community, and by extension its military community as well.

In terms of their composition, as might be expected, a core of knightly families remained at the apex of Norfolk county society throughout the decades between 1350 and 1430, while others fell from, or raised themselves into, the elite during this period - an elite, it should be reiterated, that comprised perhaps thirty to fifty families at any one time. Those families that remained prominent throughout the era included the Morleys, Scales', Kerdistons, Hastings, Stranges, Stapeltons, Thorpes, Ingoldesthorpes, Howards, Harlings, Sheltons, Ingloses, Noons and Cursons.² While these families maintained their prosperity, others fell by the wayside. To cite a handful of prominent examples, the Inghams became extinct in the male line in 1349; the Norwiches in 1373; the Feltons in 1381; the Gissings in 1382; the Mortimers in 1387; the Playses in 1391; the Verdons in 1392, and the Bardolfs in 1408.³ Other well-to-do knightly families, less central to this study, who died out during these years included the Banyards, Antinghams, Wacheshams, Hemenhales, Bournes, and Peverels.⁴ The decline of these families illustrates the extent to which vacancies occurred amongst the upper echelons of Norfolk society.

Of course, as a social dynamic, one family's failure was another's path to greater wealth and prestige, and in the socially mobile world of post-plague society, there was no shortage of gentry looking to take a failed family's place or to

² Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, 11 vols.

³ *CP*, i, pp. 419-20; vii, pp. 60-2; x, p. 542; ix, p. 766; P. Morgan, 'Sir Thomas Felton', *ODNB*, ix, pp. 286-7; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, pp. 49-53, 174; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 156.

⁴ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, viii, p. 75; ii, p. 456; v, pp. 18-20, 145, 186, 190.

aggrandise themselves at their expense.⁵ Not only did some established families further enhance their prosperity by these means, but various *parvenus* and men from foreign parts also entered the county's elite via this route. The Stapeltons of Bedale (Yorks.), as we have seen, acquired the Ingham inheritance and the lordship that pertained to it;⁶ lucrative Felton estates eventually passed to the Cursons of Billingford and Bylaugh;⁷ the Heveninghams, a predominantly Suffolk-based family, improved their position in Norfolk through marriage to the Gissing heiress;⁸ Sir John Radcliffe, a Lancashire-born career soldier, likewise married his way into Norfolk's elite, obtaining the hand of the Mortimers' co-heiress;⁹ the lawyer family, the Witchinghams, acquired the Antinghams' eponymous manorial residence;¹⁰ the duke of York's steward, Sir Thomas Gerbergh, obtained the Norfolk manor of Marlingford through marriage to the Wacheshams;¹¹ the Thorpes of Ashwellthorpe increased their family's landholdings upon the collapse in the male line of their kinsmen, the Banyards of Colkirk;¹² and as a final example, the Harlings and Geneys jointly profited from Sir Nicholas Bourne's death without male heir.¹³ Purchasing power too lay in the hands of successful careerists, and consequently East Anglian soldier- and lawyer-administrators, like the cadets, Sir Thomas Felton and Sir Hugh Hastings, the *condottieri*, Sir Nicholas Dagworth and Sir William Elmham, the celebrated Lancastrian soldier, Sir John Fastolf, and the royal justices Robert Clere, William Witchingham, William Paston and William Yelverton, as well as the Berneys of Gunton and Great Witchingham, all carved out substantial patrimonies in Norfolk over the generations.¹⁴

⁵ Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, pp. 192-3.

⁶ *CP*, vii, pp. 60-2.

⁷ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, p. 362; viii, p. 188; x, pp. 10, 336; *CCR*, 1381-5, pp. 422, 596; *CCR*, 1385-9, p. 653; *CPR*, 1405-8, p. 345; TNA, CP25/1/168/179/190, 195; CP25/1/223/106/2, 20; *CCR*, 1413-19, p. 276.

⁸ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, p. 174.

⁹ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 156.

¹⁰ Blomefeld, *History of Norfolk*, viii, p. 75.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, ii, p. 456.

¹² *Ibid.*, v, p. 145.

¹³ *Ibid.*, v, p. 190.

¹⁴ For the profits derived from legal, administrative and military careers, see esp. Chapters Four and Five.

Regardless of how they achieved their prominence, what the county elite had in common was the possession of landed wealth and concurrent social status substantial enough for them to demand and receive the ‘worship’ of those around them. The idea of ‘worship’ may be defined as “the condition (in a person) of deserving, or being held in, esteem or repute; honour, distinction, renown”.¹⁵ In this context, the greater gentry were, in straightforward terms, the families whose ‘good lordship’ was desired by lesser gentry, yeomen farmers, and husbandmen, who collectively comprised their tenants, or who merely lived in the immediate vicinity of their principal residence. The greater gentry were thus the pre-eminent individuals in the highly localised world of their parish or hundred. The style in which they lived and the duties they performed during their careers may be understood in these terms. They had to remain figures of good repute amongst their fellow elite, but simultaneously they needed to command the respect of their neighbours of lesser rank.¹⁶ This was ‘good lordship’ of the type practised on a much wider scale by the higher nobility, and if the Paston Letters provide any sort of guide, the maintenance of one’s ‘worship’ in the shire was evidently a matter worthy of consideration and reflection. John Russe, a servant of the Pastons, warned John Paston I, for the sake of the latter’s worship, to “leue wyfullnesse, whyche men sey ye occupye to excessively”, while Sir John Paston II was reminded that over-expenditure could severely damage his reputation and lead to “diswurche”.¹⁷

As local lords, style and deportment were naturally essential to the command of worship. The greater gentry had to dress the part, making sure that they stood out from neighbours of lesser degree, and that they kept up appearances with those of similar rank. The correspondence between the Paston brothers, John II and III, refers to the latter’s need for suitable attire, especially new hats.¹⁸ As relative *parvenus*, one can well understand the Pastons’ fervent desire to look the part. Their great-

¹⁵ As cited in R. L. Radulescu, *The Gentry Context For Malory’s Morte Darthur* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-24.

¹⁷ *PL*, ed. Davis, ii, pp. 307-8; i, p. 351. Philippa Maddern has pointed out that these snippets of advice were addressed in similar tone to ‘mirrors of princes’, and that the Pastons may justifiably be perceived as “little king(s)” in the area surrounding their home in northeast Norfolk. P. C. Maddern, ‘Honour among the Pastons: Gender and Identity in English Provincial Society’, *Journal of Medieval History*, xiv (1988), 363.

¹⁸ Richmond, *The Paston Family: Fastolf’s Will*, pp. 36-7.

grandfather was a husbandman after all.¹⁹ However, it was obviously not only *nouveaux-riches* who had to maintain an outward appearance worthy of their degree. The wills of the county elite, in which they dispensed their goods to friends and relatives, remind one that they lived a lifestyle always comfortable, and often opulent. William, third Lord Morley, in his will dated 1379, left his heir, Thomas, the heirlooms of his hall, as well as his best bed of silk, three red carpets bearing the family's arms, and six silk cushions.²⁰ In like fashion, Sir Miles Stapelton, in his will of 1414, left his heir, Brian, a silver cup which belonged to St Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, a red bed with black dolphins, over twenty fine dishes and saucers, and a cup that had belonged to his father which was evidently a family heirloom.²¹ Even a relatively middle-of-the-road lawyer, clinging to the lower rungs of the elite, like Thomas Derham of Crimlesham, could leave as bequests beds, woven hangings, curtains, carpets, silver vessels, carts, carriages, farming equipment, livestock and a horse.²²

As these examples indicate, the lavishness of one's lifestyle was pivotal to the maintenance of esteem in the eyes of one's neighbours and fellow elite. Such social assumptions were indeed enshrined in law. The detailed sumptuary legislation of 1363, as well as the Poll Tax return of 1379 and the Income Tax return of 1436, reveal the extent to which contemporary society was aware that a man worthy of respect had to dress in the manner appropriate to his station, had to possess a specific income worthy of that estate, and that the higher his estate, the more elaborately he was supposed to live.²³ It is in this light that esquires dubbed to knighthood, knights promoted to bannerets, or bannerets raised to the peerage, often received money gifts from the Crown to accompany their promotion, specifically granted to better enable them to live in the manner befitting their new rank.²⁴ Obviously too, the display of

¹⁹ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 129.

²⁰ NRO, NCC, Reg. Heydon, 161.

²¹ 'Extracts from Early Wills in the Norwich Registries', ed. H. Harrod, *Norfolk Archaeology*, iv (1855), 321.

²² *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, p. 779.

²³ See Chapter One.

²⁴ E.g. When Robert Ufford was elevated to the earldom of Suffolk in 1337, he was granted an additional 1,000 marks in lands and rents to better support his new rank, and received a series of further grants in the following months for the same purpose. *CPR, 1334-8*, p. 418; *CCR, 1337-9*, p. 60; *CP*, xii (i), p. 430. For the political

one's social degree was maintained in military theatres. Bannerets were expected to provide more followers on campaign than knights, and knights were likewise expected to possess a larger retinue than sub-knightly men-at-arms.²⁵ Moreover, the splendour and quality of one's armour and weapons, or the cost of one's horse, were all factors that reflected one's place in the pecking order.²⁶

Naturally society was much more fluid than these sharp divisions allow. Charles Moreton, Colin Richmond and Philippa Maddern have all demonstrated that East Anglia's county elite was not a closed circle. All three have shown that intimate friendships were quite regularly formed by substantial local families with their social inferiors, often expressed by bequests in wills and by the choice of such lesser men to act as feoffees and witnesses, transactions in which trust was a pre-requisite to ensure against duplicity.²⁷ Despite such personal predilections, however, the rigid social divisions detailed above nonetheless represented the official line of Crown and genteel society alike, and popular opinion judged a man by these criteria.

Given these social expectations, it is easy enough to recognise why, in the vicinity of their principal residences, the county elite had to stand out from their immediate neighbours for the sake of their own honour and reputation. Their architectural legacies reveal the extent to which they were beacons of prosperity at the level of the hundred. Incised brass tombs, for instance, advertised their professional prowess. This was a vogue adopted by both military and non-military gentry, with knightly effigies bedecked in armour, and men of law depicted wearing coif and gown.²⁸ The brass tomb of Sir Hugh Hastings I (d. 1347) is one of the grandest

circumstances surrounding Ufford's elevation, see J. S. Bothwell, 'Edward III and the 'New Nobility': Largesse and Limitation in Fourteenth-Century England', *EHR*, cxii (1997), 1111-40.

²⁵ Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 46-50; for the overall structure of English armies during the age of the Hundred Years War, see Ayton, 'English Armies in the Fourteenth Century', pp. 303-19; Curry, 'English Armies in the Fifteenth Century', pp. 39-68.

²⁶ Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses*, pp. 224-51.

²⁷ Moreton, 'A Social Gulf?', 255-62; Richmond, *John Hopton*; Richmond, *The Paston Family: Fastolf's Will*; Maddern, 'Best Trusted Friends', pp. 100-17.

²⁸ N. Saul, 'Bold as Brass: Secular Display in English Medieval Brasses', *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England*, ed. P. R. Coss and M. H. Keen (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 178-9.

survivals from the later Middle Ages. Situated in the church of St Mary at Elsing, it commemorated both Hastings' military achievements and his social connections with numerous members of the higher nobility.²⁹ Sir Hugh was depicted "in armour with a heraldic jupon, his feet upon a lion, his head resting on a cushion supported by two angels, within a canopy".³⁰ The canopy's elaborate iconography would have required the expertise of a skilled artisan, while on the side shafts of the canopy were depicted Sir Hugh's comrades in arms, represented as mourners. The choice of mourners was specifically designed to underline Sir Hugh's impressive pedigree as a respected warrior and a cadet of the Hastings earls of Pembroke. On the dexter side were to be found King Edward III, the earl of Warwick, Hugh Lord Despenser, and Sir John Grey of Ruthin, while those on the sinister side were Henry of Grosmont, earl (later duke) of Lancaster, Laurence Hastings, earl of Pembroke, Ralph Lord Stafford, and Aymer, Lord St Amand.³¹ Hastings' brass was naturally only the most spectacular of several such surviving monuments that dotted East Anglia during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and there would very likely have been others produced that have not stood the test of time, perhaps destroyed amidst renovations in later centuries, or removed when a dilapidated manor was raised to the ground.³²

Indeed the manor houses in which the knightly elite lived were of themselves sources of prestige, reminding immediate neighbours that their occupants were the

²⁹ L. Dennison and N. Rogers, 'The Elsing Brass and Its East Anglian Connections', *Fourteenth-Century England I*, ed. N. Saul (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 167-93.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

³² Other brasses include: Sir Nicholas Dagworth at Blickling; Sir Adam Clifton at Buckenham; Oliver Lord Ingham at Ingham Church; Sir Edmund Thorpe II at Ashwellthorpe; Sir William Kerdiston II at Repham; Sir William Calthorpe at Burnham-Thorpe; Sir George Felbrigg at Playford in Suffolk; and Sir Simon Felbrigg and his wife at Felbrigg. *List of Rubbings of Brasses: Classified and Arranged in Chronological Order*, ed. H. W. Prior (London, 1915), pp. 1-4; J. Lee-Warner, 'The Stapletons of Ingham', *Norfolk Archaeology*, viii (1879), 216-18; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, v, p. 150; R. Marks, 'Sir Edmund Thorp and his Ancestors: The Lost East Window of Ashwellthorpe Church', *Much Heaving and Shoving: Late-Medieval Gentry and their Concerns. Essays for Colin Richmond*, ed. M. Aston and R. Horrox (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 17-21. For surveys of medieval glass in Norfolk see, C. Woodforde, *The Norwich School of Glass-Painting in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1950); D. J. King, *Stained Glass Tours Around Norfolk Churches* (Fakenham, The Norfolk Society, 1974). For the later destruction of stained glass in the region see, *The Journal of William Dowsing: Iconoclasm in East Anglia during the English Civil War*, ed. T. Cooper (Woodbridge, 2001).

leading family in the area. It is unsurprising, therefore, that considerable sums were expended on making such homes as grandiose as possible.³³ Sir John Norwich received licence to crenellate his castle at Mettingham in Suffolk, as well as his manors of Blakworth near Norwich, and Ling Hall in northeast Norfolk.³⁴ Thomas Lord Scales, probably utilising the profits derived from his years of military service in Lancastrian France, initiated an extensive series of renovations at his magnificent family home at Middleton near King's Lynn.³⁵ In like fashion, two of Norfolk's well-established knightly families of the fourteenth century, the Mortimers of Attleborough and the Kerdistons of Claxton and Repham, enlarged their residences during this earlier period. Attleborough was heavily fortified, containing a drawbridge removed during the fifteenth century, while Sir William Kerdiston II received licence in 1339 to fortify his Claxton manor. That the extensions undertaken by the Kerdistons were considerable is borne out by the fact that Sir William's son, William III, received a second licence over three decades later to finish the building work.³⁶ Equally imposing would have been John Wodehouse's manor at Kimberley. It contained a large hall called Wodehouse Tower, which was 130 yards by 70 yards and was surrounded by a moat. Additional fortifications included a quadrangle with flanking turrets, as well as a keep.³⁷ Beyond all of these examples, the most famous residence of this period was Caister Castle, constructed between 1432 and 1444 at the behest of Sir John Fastolf.³⁸ An elaborate attestation to Fastolf's acquired wealth and dignity in the world of chivalry, its costs totalled more than £6,000,³⁹ and its fortifications were such that it featured in a minor episode of the Wars of the Roses, when John

³³ For the political meanings inherent in stained glass construction in Norfolk, see D. J. King, 'Reading the Material Culture: Stained Glass and Politics in Late Medieval Norfolk', *Fifteenth Century England VIII*, ed. L. Clark (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 105-23.

³⁴ CPR, 1343-5, p. 106; Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales*, ii, p. 124.

³⁵ Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales*, ii, pp. 126-7.

³⁶ Ibid., ii, p. 166; CPR, 1338-40, p. 529; CPR, 1374-7, p. 395.

³⁷ Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales*, ii, p. 190.

³⁸ A. Hawkyard, 'Sir John Fastolf's 'Gret Mansion By Me Late Edified': Caister Castle, Norfolk', *The Fifteenth Century V - Of Mice and Men: Image, Belief and Regulation in Late Medieval England*, ed. L. Clark (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 41-2.

³⁹ Oxford: Magdalen College, FP 69.

Mowbray, duke of Norfolk, besieged its then owners, the Pastons, with cannon and artillery.⁴⁰

For the greater gentry, these manor houses reflected their status as local lords. It would have been in the halls of these magnificent buildings that they settled disputes among their tenants, that they hosted their neighbours, friends, and business colleagues, and that they wine and dined their fellow elite. Families of this ilk were the richest and best connected in the county. Through their imposing building projects, their place at the forefront of Norfolk society was reinforced and their ties to families of similar or greater income and status were advertised.

There were other factors beyond a crude class-consciousness that loosely united Norfolk's county elite. Aside from the county's foremost lawyers and bureaucrats, most of the greater gentry were knights or wealthy esquires. For such families, military service in the king's wars had become an established tradition by the Edwardian age, and it is here that the overlap between the county elite and the military elite becomes apparent. For much of the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries armorial bearings maintained a specifically military connotation, and consequently an armigerous family's sense of identity and personal honour was intimately connected with the expectation that they would fulfil the martial function expected of their rank.⁴¹ This would have represented an especially important consideration for men whose fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers had achieved noteworthy reputations through their deeds with the sword in bygone days. Such young knights would have found themselves with big shoes to fill. A desire to uphold their family's martial traditions thus provided the knightly elite with a sound reason to undertake overseas expeditions, while more material incentives - the opportunity to acquire booty and captives, to make useful contacts with the higher nobility, and to receive the king's wages and favour - all played their part as well.⁴² Additionally, renown on the field of battle would have served to enhance a family's status back home in Norfolk, while continued apathy would have made them appear inferior in comparison to their knightly brethren who had participated.

⁴⁰ Worcester, *Itineraries*, pp. 187-91.

⁴¹ Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*, pp. 15-17.

⁴² See Chapter Five.

In this light, it is no surprise that most of Norfolk's established knightly elite campaigned extensively generation after generation. The county's barons led the way. The Lords Morley contributed five consecutive generations of soldiers to the Anglo-French wars, from William, first Lord Morley's, participation on the Gascony expedition of 1295, through to the service performed by his great-great-great grandson, Thomas, fifth Lord Morley, on the Normandy campaigns of the 1420s.⁴³ Robert, first Lord Scales, had served Edward I in Wales from 1277, his son had been active in the Scottish campaigns of the following reign, and his descendants participated in all three phases of the Hundred Years War, ending with Thomas, seventh Lord Scales, who was still serving in Normandy as late as 1449.⁴⁴ The Bardolfs too, although they lost their baronial seat at Wormegay in 1405, nonetheless had kin serving in Henry V's invasion force of 1417, while their ancestors had been active five generations earlier in the Scottish and French campaigns of Edward I.⁴⁵ The established knightly elite were no less zealous. The Thorpes had fought the Scots under Edward I, had been present at Crécy in 1346, and became extinct in the male line following the death in France of Sir Edmund Thorpe II in 1418.⁴⁶ The Hastings contributed three successive generations of soldiers to the campaigns of the fourteenth century, whose careers in arms were praised before the Court of Chivalry.⁴⁷ Sir Miles Stapelton had made his reputation at Crécy and his eponymous great-grandson was still serving in France in 1437.⁴⁸ The Kerdistons were likewise militarily-active almost every generation for more than a century,⁴⁹ while the Feltons⁵⁰ and Playses⁵¹

⁴³ *CPR, 1292-1301*, pp. 135, 150; 'Treaty Rolls', *Forty-fourth Report of the DKR* (London, 1883), Appendix, pp. 604, 622. Hereafter, 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1883), Appendix.

⁴⁴ *CPR, 1272-81*, p. 220; *CP*, xi, p. 501; *CPR, 1446-52*, p. 305.

⁴⁵ *The Rolls of Arms of the Princes, Barons and Knights who attended King Edward I to the Siege of Caerlaverock in 1300*, ed. T. Wright (London, 1864), p. 2; 'Norman Rolls', *Forty-first Report of the DKR* (London, 1880), Appendix i, p. 732. Hereafter, 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1880), Appendix i.

⁴⁶ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, v, pp. 143-4; *The Rolls of Arms of Edward I*, ed. G. J. Brault (London, 1997), ii, p. 414; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, pp. 598-600; 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1880), Appendix i, pp. 683, 711.

⁴⁷ *PCM*, *passim*.

⁴⁸ Lee-Warner, 'The Stapletons of Ingham', pp. 200, 204.

⁴⁹ See below.

⁵⁰ *The Rolls of Arms of Edward I*, ed. Brault, ii, p. 161; *CP*, v, p. 291; *BPrege*, iv, p. 207.

served over consecutive generations until failure of male issue brought their dynasties to an abrupt end. For established knightly families like these, military service was their *raison d'être*, compelling son to follow father on campaign in order to uphold his family's military traditions.⁵²

The hard-won chivalrous reputations of many of Norfolk's knightly families naturally made them the undisputed leaders of military society in the county. As will be discussed in greater depth in later chapters, they were the men who brought personal retinues on campaign and who provided wartime employment for militarily-active lesser gentry, archers and foot-soldiers. Moreover, at the county level, knights and esquires of military experience were those traditionally called upon to array the shire levies demanded by the Crown prior to each campaign.⁵³ There was plenty of scope for Norfolk's knightly elite and county administrators to be active as organisers in the weeks preceding continental expeditions. To cite one notable occasion, the army Edward III led to France in July 1338 gathered in Norfolk prior to its departure. Levies drawn from eighteen shires, and comprising 90% of Edward's archers, were inspected at Norwich, while the king and about half his army embarked from Ipswich, and the remainder, as well as a vast supplementary contingent of late-comers and reserves, crossed the Channel from Yarmouth in the weeks that followed.⁵⁴

As for the shire companies themselves, they were composed of groups of twenty men, each led by a 'vintemar', with a 'centemar' commanding five vintemaries (i.e. 100 men).⁵⁵ The knight in overall command was responsible for weeding out the elderly, disabled, or otherwise unsuitable recruits, leading the rest to the place of embarkation, and instilling in them enough discipline that they could form a useful fighting unit.⁵⁶ The Crown facilitated this process by often ordering that shire (or city)

⁵¹ *CP*, x, p. 540; G. Wrottesley, *Crécy and Calais* (London, 1898), pp. 90, 168, 169, 189; *Foedera*, iii, p. 812.

⁵² See Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

⁵³ A. Ayton, 'The English Army at Crécy', *The Battle of Crécy, 1346*, ed. A. Ayton and P. Preston (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 186.

⁵⁴ *Treaty Rolls*, ii, 1337-9, ed. J. Ferguson (London, 1972), no. 123; Ayton, 'The English Army at Crécy', p. 185; J. Sumption, *The Hundred Years War I: Trial By Battle* (London, 1990), p. 239.

⁵⁵ Ayton, 'The English Army at Crécy', p. 185.

⁵⁶ M. R. Powicke, *Military Obligation in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1962), p. 129.

levies be uniformly attired, and we know that in the 1380s at least troops from Norwich were commonly clothed in tunics and hoods of white and red.⁵⁷ Additionally the men in individual vintenaries were usually from the same part of the shire, so an element of friendship, or conversely internal rivalry, might have incited them to behave bravely in the face of danger, or might have instilled in them a measure of *esprit de corps*.⁵⁸ Both possibilities may have been helpful to their commander, seeking to maintain discipline and imbue his hastily arrayed amateurs with a common purpose.

Overall though, the contribution of Norfolk's vast common population to the king's wars appears to have lacked the enthusiasm evident amongst the county's knightly participants. For the Crécy expedition of 1346, for instance, Norfolk was expected to produce 200 men but could only muster 129.⁵⁹ The arrayers of additional troops during the Rheims campaign of 1359-60 struggled to fulfil their duties and had to be sharply brought to order by a letter patent from the king.⁶⁰ Even in Henry V's reign, when further men from the county were summoned as reinforcements during the conquest of Normandy, Norfolk's governing elite pleaded that there were no archers and foot-soldiers available and offered to send twenty lancers instead,⁶¹ again suggesting that gentry enthusiasm was greater than that of the commons. A significant reason for these hints of apathy among common soldiers was the fact that Norfolk was a commercially prosperous, agricultural county. Its labourers could earn the same wages as an archer or foot-soldier by toiling in the fields during harvest time, so there would have been less incentive to risk life and limb when a safer form of regular income beckoned.⁶² For the greater gentry though, their extensive service in the king's wars would only have heightened their standing in the eyes of their lesser neighbours and their fellow gentry, while sitting on commissions of array reinforced their status as leaders of Norfolk military society.

⁵⁷ W. Hudson, 'Norwich Militia in the Fourteenth Century', *Norfolk Archaeology*, xiv (1901), 284, 302.

⁵⁸ Ayton, 'The English Army at Crécy', p. 186.

⁵⁹ TNA, E403/336 m. 42.

⁶⁰ *CPR*, 1358-61, p. 415.

⁶¹ W. J. Blake, 'Fuller's List of Norfolk Gentry', *Norfolk Archaeology*, xxxii (1961), 268; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, vi, p. 78.

⁶² See Chapter Five for the economic pros and cons of military service for Norfolk's gentry.

Commissions of array, of course, were not the only public offices open to the county elite. There were other ways they could obtain local influence and could confirm their leadership credentials on the regional scene. The most prestigious offices were those of peace commissioner, M.P., and sheriff. Those named on peace commissions were nominated by the chancellor and treasurer in consultation with the royal council and were granted considerable discretion in the administration of local justice.⁶³ More *ad hoc* commissions, such as those of oyer and terminer, were usually composed of handfuls of local knights and esquires, guided in their task by a prominent lawyer or royal justice.⁶⁴ The offices of M.P. and sheriff were likewise largely monopolised by the county elite, if one includes professional administrators amongst their number. M.P.s were elected to parliament by popular vote in the county court, suggesting those men chosen were considered worthy representatives of the county's interests in the House of Commons,⁶⁵ while the sheriff wielded considerable authority in his bailiwick, being responsible for empanelling juries, summoning offenders, initiating outlawries, and administering and returning all writs.⁶⁶ By fulfilling these administrative duties, the county elite was able to sit in small clusters in judgment over their gentry brethren when disputes arose, adding a legal validity to their claims of lordship in the shire. Their selection too highlighted that the Crown recognised them as local authority figures, and it was in this vein that the same body of twenty-to-thirty families usually filled out the majority of local judicial commissions. These families were varied in their backgrounds and included long-established knightly landowners,⁶⁷ lawyers, and professional bureaucrats.⁶⁸ Some

⁶³ *Proceedings Before the Justices of the Peace in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. B. H. Putnam (London, 1938), pp. xlv-cxii.

⁶⁴ Kaeuper, 'Law and Order in Fourteenth-Century England', 734-84.

⁶⁵ Maddicott, 'The County Community', 27-43; Bennett, 'A County Community: Social Cohesion amongst the Cheshire Gentry', 24-44; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, i, pp. 512-29.

⁶⁶ For a full discussion of the sheriff's duties, see J. G. Bellamy, *Crime and Public Order in England in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1973); R. Gorski, *The Fourteenth-Century Sheriff: English Local Administration in the Late Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2003).

⁶⁷ E.g. The Lords Morley, Scales and Bardolf, and senior knightly families like the Kerdistons, Stapeltons and Thorpes. *CPR, 1350-4*, p. 526; *CPR, 1354-8*, p. 227; *CPR, 1361-4*, pp. 64, 285; *CPR, 1364-7*, p. 149; *CPR, 1367-70*, p. 266; *CPR, 1370-4*, p. 106; *CPR, 1374-7*, p. 138.

men, especially those on the rise, made county office holding an integral facet of their careers,⁶⁹ while in a few cases these duties evidently became family traditions that informally passed down the generations.⁷⁰

For some, especially lawyers and retired soldiers, a career in administration offered security, influence and prestige. It was one of many paths into the county elite. A middling bureaucrat might possess minimal landed wealth and no coat-of-arms, but his service as a county official, or as a magnate's steward, would have made him a man of substance in the shire.⁷¹ Some knights ostensibly chose to avoid such tiresome public duties, yet the fact that many others turned their hand to it on a regular basis suggests that a voice in county politics, and the direct power one could wield in this capacity, were considered well worth having.⁷²

The widespread daily interaction of the county elite in the public sphere was reinforced also in their private concerns. In the status-conscious world of the greater gentry, prominent families tended to arrange marriages where possible with their associates of similar wealth and standing. Marriage was essentially a business and a most important one at that. It was rarely wholly conceived of in fiscal terms however. If a family wished to fill their coffers, they were better served to adopt the more straightforward remedy of selling off some of their property.⁷³ Pecuniary advantage was inevitably desired, but just as important a factor was the maintenance or improvement of one's social position. This might solely be a matter of prestige, but it

⁶⁸ E.g. The royal justices Robert Clere, William Witchingham and William Paston, and the estate administrators, Edmund Gournay, Edmund Clippesby, John Berney, Reginald Eccles and Thomas Derham. Ibid; *CPR, 1396-9*, p. 436; *CPR, 1399-1401*, p. 561; *CPR, 1422-9*, p. 566.

⁶⁹ E.g. Sir Robert Causton sat as M.P. for Norfolk eleven times between 1336 and 1358 and Sir John White performed the same duty seven times between 1385 and 1395. Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, pp. 42-7.

⁷⁰ E.g. Three members of the Winter family of Town Barningham collectively acted as sheriff three times, escheator five times, and M.P. on thirteen occasions between 1380 and 1436. Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, pp. 44-7; *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87; *List of Escheators for England and Wales* (London, PRO Lists and Indexes, ix, 1898), pp. 86-7.

⁷¹ Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 191-3, 197-9.

⁷² See Chapter Five for examples of Norfolk soldiers turning their hand to county administration.

⁷³ S. J. Payling, 'The Economics of Marriage in Late Medieval England: The Marriage of Heiresses', *ECHR*, New Series, liv (2001), 416.

could also be achieved through the acquisition of landed estates, which represented the most potent symbol of high social status in this era.

Parents and guardians usually had the greatest say in the choice of their children's first marriage partners and it was not unknown for marriages to be arranged when the future bride and groom were still very young.⁷⁴ Sir Edmund Thorpe II was probably no more than a child in 1368 when he wed Margaret de la River of Little Dunham, although Margaret died childless, thereby assuredly scuttling the parental plans that had lain behind their union.⁷⁵ Similarly, William Lord Marshal, guardian of the underage Robert, second Lord Morley, wed his young ward to his own daughter, Hawise, although Hawise similarly died young a little over a decade later.⁷⁶ So too, Sir Hamo Strange of Hunstanton and his neighbour, the Black Prince's follower, Sir Richard Walkefare of Dersingham, married off their children, John and Eleanor, to one another.⁷⁷ Eleanor was co-heiress to her father's estates and through this tie the young John Strange acquired several Walkefare manors across East Anglia.⁷⁸ Additionally, the prudence of Sir Hamo Strange's choice for his son's bride becomes clearer still when one considers that this marriage simultaneously connected the Stranges through the maternal line with Sir Thomas Morieux, royal household knight and future marshal of John of Gaunt's army. Morieux was Eleanor's uncle and left his niece his estates at Felsham and Thorpe Morieux (Suff.) upon his death in 1388. More importantly, this association granted John Strange entrée into John of Gaunt's affinity and paved the way for a lifetime of service to the house of Lancaster.⁷⁹

More generally, when viewed at a distance, one may perceive the importance of blood and marriage ties as a sort of glue that loosely united Norfolk's greater gentry - both soldiers and civilians - at the county level. Marriages between families of similar rank were useful to both parties because they strengthened and reinforced

⁷⁴ Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, pp. 26-30.

⁷⁵ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, v, p. 119.

⁷⁶ *CPR*, 1307-19, p. 308; *CPR*, 1327-30, p. 134.

⁷⁷ NRO, (Le Strange) LEST/A12.

⁷⁸ *CPR*, 1358-61, p. 159; *BPREg*, iv, pp. 408, 411-12, 422, 432; *Feudal Aids* (London, 1899-1920), iii, p. 640.

⁷⁹ *CPR*, 1381-5, p. 141; *CPR*, 1388-92, p. 472; *CPR*, 1391-6, p. 99; *CP*, v, pp. 502-3; S. K. Walker, 'John of Gaunt and his Retainers, 1361-99' (D.Phil, Oxford, 1986), pp. 245-6.

their place amongst the upper echelons of county society, while the shared blood that commingled in their offspring would have increased the latter's position of respectability. As such, a host of established knightly families intermarried. One set of interlocking examples will suffice to illustrate the point. The Banyards of Colkirk married into the Thorpes of Ashwellthorpe, the Cliftons of Buckenham into the Howards of Wiggenhale and East Winch, and the Ingloses of Lodden into the Grooses of Sloley.⁸⁰ These three unions highlight just how widespread were the kinship ties of Norfolk's greater gentry. The Thorpes were also connected by marriage to the de la Rivers, the Northwoods, the Cliftons, and the Lords Scales;⁸¹ the Cliftons were kin of the Howards, the Playses and the de la Poles;⁸² and the Ingloses were relatives of the Calthorpes, the Whites and the Uffords, and through the Grooses to the Cleres and the Yelvertons.⁸³ All of the above families were either of established knightly stock, or had recently risen to the forefront of Norfolk society through careers in war, law, or administration. Moreover, these associations merely represent the tip of the iceberg, and when an individual family's full array of sons- and daughters-in-law, nephews, nieces, cousins, step-siblings and their offspring, not to mention godparents, are all brought into the equation, then it becomes plain precisely why scholars have noted the county elite's propensity for marrying amongst themselves. Indeed, stepping beyond the limited pool of Norfolk's gentry, marriages were sometimes contracted with fellow elites from neighbouring or far flung counties as well, and it was in this fashion that one finds the Barrys of Hertfordshire, the Stapeltons of Yorkshire, the Radcliffes of Lancashire, the Burghs of Cambridgeshire, the Marneys of Essex, the Burgulions of Lincolnshire and the Uvedales of Surrey all marrying into prominent Norfolk families.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, v, p. 145; CP, iii, p. 308; Richmond, *The Paston Family: The First Phase*, p. 214.

⁸¹ Sir Edmund Thorpe jr had first married Margaret de la River. After her death, he wed Joan, daughter of Sir John Northwood and widow of Roger, fourth Lord Scales. Thorpe's daughter, also Joan, married Sir John Clifton of Buckenham. Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, v, pp. 119, 140, 142-51; CP, iii, p. 308.

⁸² CP, iii, pp. 307-8.

⁸³ Richmond, *The Paston Family: The First Phase*, p. 214.

⁸⁴ Castor, *The King, The Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 129; Lee-Warner, 'The Stapletons of Ingham', 200-1; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, pp. 438, 511-15; viii, p. 242; x, p. 305; CCR, 1377-81, p. 359; *A Short Calendar of the Feet of Fines for Norfolk*, ed. W. Rye (Norwich, 1885), pp. 289-90, 295; CPR, 1374-7, p.

In spite of the efforts of the established elite to maintain themselves, however, the period after the Black Death remained one of heightened social mobility, during which time careers became increasingly open to talent. For *parvenus*, acquiring the hand of a substantial heiress represented a significant step on their road to accepted gentility.⁸⁵ Just as great families brought local political weight, landed income, and the ancient status associated with their blood and honourable name to the bargaining table, so new men possessed their own distinct advantages.⁸⁶ If they were self-made lawyers, possibly royal judges, they would have been extremely well paid and consequently able to afford an expensive bride.⁸⁷ Their legal knowledge would have further enhanced their suitability as potential marriage partners, since they were obviously well trained to defend their own lands against litigious neighbours, while it would undoubtedly have pleased the bride's family to have a son-in-law who would presumably represent them free of charge were they brought to court.⁸⁸

Of greater significance for our purposes, the career soldier was also well placed to buy or marry his way into landed society.⁸⁹ This move would add substance to the claims to gentility that he had earned through his honourable exploits with the sword. Several of Norfolk's career soldiers made matches beyond county borders, and, conversely, a number of esteemed warriors from other counties married into

296; *CIPM*, ix, p. 182; xii, p. 386; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 13; iv, p. 355.

⁸⁵ For lawyers on the rise marrying into landed society, see E. W. Ives, *The Common Lawyers in Pre-Reformation England* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 370-3; Bennett, 'Careerism in Late Medieval England', pp. 33-4.

⁸⁶ For the role played by royal and noble patronage in the rise of new men, see Chapter Four.

⁸⁷ A. Harding, *A Social History of English Law* (Harmondsworth, 1966), pp. 167-93; E. W. Ives, 'The Common Lawyers in Pre-Reformation England', *TRHS*, fifth series, xviii (1968), 145-73.

⁸⁸ Examples of the legally trained marrying into the knightly class and the wealthy squirearchy include Justice William Paston to Agnes, daughter of Sir Edmund Barry; the lawyer Edmund Gournay to Katherine, daughter of the Suffolk knight Sir William Wauncy; and the soldier-administrator John Reymes of Overstrand to Margaret, daughter of the lawyer William Winter. Richmond, *The Paston Family: The First Phase*, pp. xvi-xvii, 31-4, 117-19; D. Gurney, *Records of the House of Gurney* (London, 1848), pp. 374-81; A. L. Raimes, 'Reymes of Overstrand', *Norfolk Archaeology*, xxx (1952), 33.

⁸⁹ Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, pp. 188-9.

Norfolk's elite. Sir Nicholas Dagworth, marrying very late in life, acquired the hand of the co-heiress of a northern knightly family, the Rossalls.⁹⁰ The Garter Knights, Sir Miles Stapelton of Yorkshire and Sir John Radcliffe of Lancashire, as we have seen, wed the heiresses of Oliver Lord Ingham and Sir Thomas Mortimer, and established their descendants at the forefront of Norfolk society.⁹¹ Most famously, Sir John Fastolf married Millicent, daughter of Robert Lord Tiptoft and widow of Sir Stephen Scrope, which brought him a host of lands in northern England, valued at £240 p.a., as well as family ties to the peerage.⁹² Whether their names had been made in the courtroom or on the battlefield, Norfolk men on the rise utilised their acquired riches, their social contacts, and the talents associated with their vocation, to find themselves heiresses and to buy their way into the world of established genteel society. Once this had been achieved, their common origins could gradually be forgotten, especially if they fabricated pedigrees that attested to their ancient gentility.⁹³

None of what has thus far been said is particularly surprising. It essentially provides Norfolk-based evidence to support the trends relating to gentry kinship, marriage and deportment in later medieval England uncovered by a host of scholars at both the national and regional level.⁹⁴ This study, however, to stress the point, perceives Norfolk's greater knights and esquires not only as members of the county elite, but also as members of Norfolk's military elite. As will be elucidated through

⁹⁰ *CPR, 1391-6*, p. 593; *CPR, 1396-9*, p. 492.

⁹¹ *CP*, vii, pp. 61-3; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 156.

⁹² J. Hughes, 'Stephen Scrope and the Circle of Sir John Fastolf: Moral and Intellectual Outlooks', *Medieval Knighthood IV: Papers from the Fifth Strawberry Hill Conference, 1990*, ed. C. Harper-Bill and R. Harvey (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 110; G. L. Harriss, 'Sir John Fastolf', *ODNB*, xix, p. 134.

⁹³ See Chapter Seven.

⁹⁴ J. R. Lander, 'Family, 'Friends' and Politics in Fifteenth-Century England', *Kings and Nobles in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. R. A. Griffiths and J. Sherborne (New York, 1986), pp. 27-40; K. Dockray, 'Why Did Fifteenth-Century English Gentry Marry? The Pastons, Plumpton and Stonors Reconsidered', *Gentry and Lesser Nobility in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. M. Jones (Gloucester, 1986), pp. 61-80; Payling, 'The Economics of Marriage', 413-29. These ties are discussed in a local context in the majority of regional studies. Richmond, *John Hopton*, pp. 100-257; Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, pp. 21-40; Wright, *The Derbyshire Gentry*, pp. 210-46; N. Saul, *Scenes From Provincial Life: Knightly Families in Sussex 1280-1400* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 1-72, 161-92; Acheson, *The Leicestershire Gentry*, pp. 135-73; Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England*, pp. 19-86; Carpenter, *Locality and Polity*, pp. 97-119.

more localised case studies in the following two sections, most active warriors associated extensively among their own kind, despite simultaneously developing relationships with the non-military elite of the shire.

Nowhere is the influence of vocation in shaping social relations plainer than on the marriage market.⁹⁵ Sir William Kerdiston II fought alongside the Lords Brewes and their junior branches in the wars with France during the 1340s and married his son, William III, to the Brewes' daughter, Cecily.⁹⁶ Sir Thomas Felton and his father-in-law, Sir Richard Walkefare, were both prominent on the Black Prince's military expeditions.⁹⁷ Sir John Plays, active in the king's wars from the 1350s, took as his first wife, Sir John Norwich's sister, Margaret, and as his second, Joan, daughter of Sir Miles Stapelton.⁹⁸ Both Norwich and Stapelton had fought across the Channel with Plays or his father, Sir Richard, during the middle years of Edward III's reign.⁹⁹ In like fashion, Sir Ralph Shelton I, a Crécy veteran, took for his second wife Joan, a daughter of Sir John Plays.¹⁰⁰ Finally, as a later example of the same vogue, Sir Robert Harling and Sir William Chamberlain, zealous captains during the conquest of

⁹⁵ It was not only the military elite who regularly married into the families of men of the same vocation. Intermarriage within the legal profession was also common. E.g. the Edwardian royal justices Robert Clere and William Witchingham married off their children, William and Denise, to each another. Robert Clere's eponymous grandson wed the widow of John Yelverton, thereby becoming stepfather to the future royal justice, William Yelverton. The Witchinghams meanwhile were tied by marriage to another lawyer family, the Berneys of neighbouring Great Witchingham, whose head, John Berney, purportedly ran a thriving legal practice in Norwich. *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, p. 581; *The Visitation of Norfolk*, ed. W. Rye (S.I., Harleian Soc., xxxii, 1891) ii, pp. 270, 293-4; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, p. 208; *BPrege*, iv, pp. 261, 263. Colin Richmond has suggested that John Berney was a Norwich merchant, rather than a lawyer. Richmond, *The Paston Family: The First Phase*, p. 150.

⁹⁶ *CP*, vii, p. 192; *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, i, p. 63; W. L. E. Parsons, *Salle: The Story of a Norfolk Parish. Its Church, Manors and People* (Norwich, 1937), pp. 216-18.

⁹⁷ *BPrege*, iv, pp. 234, 470; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 500.

⁹⁸ TNA, CP25(1)166/161/89; *CP*, x, p. 542.

⁹⁹ Norwich and Sir Richard Plays had fought together at Crécy. Wrottesley, *Crécy and Calais*, pp. 90, 168, 169, 189; Sir John Plays had served with Sir Miles Stapelton on the Rheims campaign of 1359-60. TNA, E101/393/11, f. 7v; TNA, E101/393/11, f. 13v.

¹⁰⁰ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 356; NRO, NCC Reg. Heydon, f. 117.

Normandy and its aftermath, tightened the bond between their families through Chamberlain's marriage to Harling's heiress, Anne.¹⁰¹

Military men too tended to marry later in life; a natural phenomenon since the more successful among them would have spent their youths away at war. There was in consequence a marked tendency for prominent men-at-arms to marry their comrade's heiresses or to acquire the hand of their recently bereaved widows. Sir Robert Benhale, a hero of Halidon Hill, married Eva, the widow of his companion, the Oxfordshire knight, Sir James Audley.¹⁰² Thomas, fourth Lord Morley, wed Anne, widow of Sir Hugh Hastings III, alongside whom Morley had fought in France and for whose son he later spoke before the Court of Chivalry.¹⁰³ In Morley's own dispute before the same court, Sir William Elmham and the Essex knight, Sir Robert Marney, both spoke on his behalf, having served in war with his ancestors and himself from the 1350s to the 1370s. Elmham later married Marney's widow, Anne. Subsequently, he continued the Hastings connection as well, taking as his second wife, Elizabeth, widow of Sir Hugh Hastings II, whose deceased husband had likewise fought extensively in France.¹⁰⁴ Sir Hamo Felton, elder brother of the more illustrious Sir Thomas, snapped up as his second wife Margaret, the widow of his brother's wartime comrade, Sir William Kerdiston II, who like the Feltons was connected with the Black Prince's household.¹⁰⁵ Lastly, Sir John Norwich became brother-in-law to Sir Robert Ufford, the future earl of Suffolk, after the latter had taken for his wife Norwich's widowed sister, Margaret.¹⁰⁶ Both the earl and Norwich fought extensively in Scotland and France during the 1330s and 1340s.¹⁰⁷ Common soldiering was obviously not the only, or necessarily the most important, reason why warrior families

¹⁰¹ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, pp. 319-20.

¹⁰² *CP*, ii, pp. 115-16.

¹⁰³ *Calendar of Papal Registers, Papal Letters, 1362-1404*, p. 375; *PCM*, i, pp. 435-9.

¹⁰⁴ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, p. 438, x, p. 305; *Feet of Fines for Norfolk*, ed. Rye, pp. 289-90, 295; *CPR, 1374-7*, p. 296; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 13. TNA, C47/6/1, nos. 27, 62.

¹⁰⁵ *CP*, v, p. 292; Green, 'Edward the Black Prince and East Anglia', p. 86.

¹⁰⁶ *CCR, 1327-30*, p. 497.

¹⁰⁷ *Rotuli Scotiae in Turri Londinensi et in Domo Capitulari Westmonasteriensi asservati*, ed. D. Macpherson, J. Caley, W. Illingworth and T. H. Horne (London, Record Comm., 1814), i, p. 286. Hereafter, *Rot. Scot.*; *CCR, 1337-9*, p. 129; *CPR, 1338-40*, pp. 196, 397, 541; *Foedera*, ii, p. 1023; Wrotesley, *Crécy and Calais*, pp. 5, 6, 31, 34, 193; *CCR, 1341-3*, pp. 568, 570; *CPR, 1343-5*, p. 528.

intermarried. Nonetheless, friendships, or at least a sense of comradeship, would surely have been forged on overseas ventures, especially on the spectacularly successful campaigns of the high Edwardian and early Lancastrian ages, and this may in part explain why these families intermarried.

Thus far, a broad overview has been provided, outlining the county elite's relations with each other at the shire level. None of these associations, it should be said, is unique to Norfolk. Nonetheless, this varied array of county-wide networks provides the necessary overall picture for what is to follow. The daily existence just described was the public sphere in which these families operated within the domestic confines of regional society and it is also clear that for the warrior gentry military ties were an important element in shaping their thinking and decision-making. Beneath this array of county-wide associations, however, more intimate and complex ties may be discerned. In the remainder of this chapter, therefore, the relations of Norfolk's warrior gentry will be investigated in a far more localised context, which might best be described as networks within networks. This will be undertaken through an examination of two social circles - those of the Lords Morley of Hingham and Sir Thomas Erpingham. Their respective private networks are particularly pertinent to this study, since both the Morleys and Erpingham well and truly had a foot both in Norfolk's county community and in its military community. They were men of social and political consequence, who were leaders of their shire, but they were also soldiers of long experience and proud martial repute, and it is the interplay between military and county society in Norfolk that comprises the focal point of this chapter.

The Morley and Erpingham Circles: The Warrior Gentry in County Society

The study of local social networks focusing upon individual gentry families has received some important scholarly attention in recent years.¹⁰⁸ In Norfolk the greatest interest has been shown in the so-called 'Caister Circle' of Sir John Fastolf, which has revealed that Fastolf was closest to his long-term household guests and attendants, to a smattering of fellow knights with whom he had fought in France, and also to a few gentry families from the surrounding area, most notably the nearby

¹⁰⁸ Richmond, *John Hopton*; Saul, *Scenes From Provincial Life*; Moreton, *The Townshends*; Maddern, 'Best Trusted Friends', pp. 100-17.

Pastons.¹⁰⁹ The social circles of the Lords Morley and Sir Thomas Erpingham, upon which the remainder of this chapter shall focus, are perhaps more complex and difficult to disentangle.¹¹⁰ Fastolf was cantankerous and disliked by many. To some degree also he gradually cut himself off from all but his selected group of close friends and servants.¹¹¹ By contrast, the Morleys and Erpingham provide a perfect illustration of the overlapping social networks that prevailed among the county elite, where great families were forced to differentiate between the public and private spheres in which they co-existed. The Morleys, peers of the realm, were one of the few great armigerous families that remained indisputably at the apex of Norfolk society between 1350 and 1430. Erpingham for his part became the public face of the shire and its effective leader after the Revolution of 1399 thanks to his proximity to Henry IV. Their backgrounds were vastly different - the Morleys barons of ancient knightly lineage, Erpingham the son of a middling knight who had risen to prominence in Lancastrian service - yet their relations with their fellow gentry were remarkably similar.

Both were the leaders of the social circles that surrounded them. In the case of the Morleys this was a natural corollary of their noble rank and the breadth of their landed wealth. As an example of their authority in the region, respected East Anglian knightly families, who held estates from them by knight's fee, included the Mautebys, Kerdistons, Uffords, Grooses, Bacons, Berneys, Cursons and Gerberghs.¹¹² As such, in whichever social circles the Morleys moved within Norfolk, especially when interacting with their knightly and sub-knightly neighbours, the feudal element in their relationships was invariably present. Substantial knightly families might well have become very close to the Morleys, but they were still at one level their social inferiors, the Morleys their feudal lord. Consequently the residual importance of the old baronies and honours that dotted the county, and the tenurial relations that flowed

¹⁰⁹ Hughes, 'Stephen Scrope and the Circle of Sir John Fastolf', pp. 109-46; Richmond, *The Paston Family: Fastolf's Will*; Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 144-55.

¹¹⁰ See Appendices IIa and IIb for samples of the connections forged respectively by the Morleys and Sir Thomas Erpingham with other East Anglian gentry families.

¹¹¹ Hughes, 'Stephen Scrope and the Circle of Sir John Fastolf', pp. 109-46; Richmond, *The Paston Family: Fastolf's Will*; Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 144-55.

¹¹² *CIPM*, xv, pp. 47-9.

from them, played an essential role in drawing local knights into the Lords Morleys' orbit.

The Morleys, of course, were men of national repute, whose horizons stretched far beyond Norfolk county society. They developed close associations amongst the higher nobility and were at various times advisors to king, council and magnates on matters political and military.¹¹³ Sir Thomas Erpingham, as we saw in the previous chapter, was similarly a prominent figure in the world of high politics. He was implicitly trusted by the first two Henrys, had voluntarily accompanied Bolingbroke into exile, was one of the men sent to inform Richard II of his deposition, sat on the privy council, received an array of money gifts, was granted strategically important offices like warden of the Cinque Ports and constable of Dover Castle, was the marshal of Prince Henry's army in Wales, and led the archers at Agincourt.¹¹⁴ For the Morleys and Erpingham, their horizons stretched far beyond the borders of their native Norfolk and the more intimate connections they forged within the shire thus represented only one social circle of many in which they moved.

Given their national prominence, the Morleys and Erpingham were naturally involved with the vast majority of Norfolk's county elite on a regular basis in their official capacities as shire office holders, military participants, and as men whose favour was worth currying. The Morleys were long active as county administrators. The career of Robert, second Lord Morley (c. 1295-1360), may stand for the rest of his family. He was a well-established public office holder as early as the 1330s, was named regularly to commissions of the peace and acted on commissions of array, oyer and terminer, on other miscellaneous inquiries, and was additionally admiral of the north fleet.¹¹⁵ While performing these duties, he interacted professionally with numerous leading gentry, participating on commissions in Norfolk with such notable county figures as John, third Lord Bardolf, Sir Miles Stapelton K.G., the county's

¹¹³ E.g. As mentioned, Thomas Lord Morley was a personal friend of Thomas of Woodstock, duke of Gloucester. Goodman, *The Loyal Conspiracy*, p. 101; *Foedera*, vii, p. 706. For the Morleys' relationship with the Ufford earls of Suffolk and their kinship ties to the baronage, see below.

¹¹⁴ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 64-81; Walker, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', *ODNB*, xviii, pp. 512-14.

¹¹⁵ E.g. *CPR, 1348-50*, p. 526; *CPR, 1354-8*, pp. 60-1; *CP*, ix, pp. 212-13; *CCR, 1354-60*, p. 654.

regular sheriff and M.P., Sir Robert Causton, and his fellow protectors of the coast, Sir John Howard and Sir John Norwich.¹¹⁶ Others with whom he associated in public office included the county's former sheriff, Sir John Colby, the mayor of Norwich, Roger Virly, the royal justices, Robert Clere, Richard Kelleshell and William Witchingham, the magnate stewards John Berney and Reginald Eccles, the merchant William de la Pole, and his knightly brethren, Sir William Kerdiston II and Sir John Ufford.¹¹⁷

Morley too bore arms for over forty years and his military ties naturally extended his network of associates well beyond the county's governing elite. Through long years of war service he became associated with the Ufford earls of Suffolk and their kinsmen, and with the militarily-active Feltons of Litcham and Hastings of Elsing.¹¹⁸ Sir John Howard and Morley were England's two foremost naval commanders of the 1330s and 1340s,¹¹⁹ and Morley, John Lord Bardolf, Sir William Kerdiston II, Sir John Norwich and Sir Miles Stapelton were active captains during the Brittany and Crécy expeditions,¹²⁰ while Sir John Verdon, Richard Lord Grey of Codnor, and the Hainaulter, Sir Walter Mauny, all served alongside Morley in the affinity and military retinue of Thomas of Brotherton (d. 1338), earl of Norfolk and uncle of Edward III.¹²¹ These types of widespread associations, developed amidst common participation in war and administration, may be considered the public sphere in which Robert Lord Morley operated. Obviously Morley was not intimately connected with every one of these men. Yet with some - especially several of his Norfolk associates - his relationship with them clearly reflected more than a professional acquaintanceship and comprised long lasting family connections that outlived him and his contemporaries and were rooted in feudal and kinship ties, magnate service, geographical proximity, legal association, and common links to particular towns and religious houses.

¹¹⁶ *CPR, 1338-40*, pp. 364, 491-2; *CPR, 1358-61*, p. 223; *CPR, 1334-8*, p. 358.

¹¹⁷ *CPR, 1348-50*, p. 526; *CPR, 1350-4*, p. 89; *CPR, 1354-8*, pp. 60-1.

¹¹⁸ See Chapters Four, Five and Six.

¹¹⁹ *CPR, 1338-40*, p. 215; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, p. 79.

¹²⁰ *Syllabus (in English) of the documents relating to England and other Kingdoms: contained in the collection known as "Rymer's Foedera"*, ed. T. D. Hardy (London, 1869), i, p. 324; Wrotesley, *Crécy and Calais*, pp. 193-204.

¹²¹ A. Marshall, 'An Early Fourteenth-Century Affinity: The Earl of Norfolk and his Following', *Fourteenth-Century England V*, ed. N. Saul (Woodbridge, 2008), p. 4.

A similar division between public and private associations was true of Sir Thomas Erpingham's relations during the early Lancastrian age. As the veritable leader of Norfolk society by virtue of his closeness to Henry IV, Erpingham's friendship, in the instrumental sense, became well worth cultivating. Helen Castor has described at length the delicate balance sought by the early Lancastrian kings between their duties as landed magnates and their wider responsibilities as anointed sovereigns.¹²² Sir Thomas Erpingham's newfound status in Norfolk society placed him in a similar predicament. His career had been carved out in Lancastrian service and most of his oldest associates were fellow Lancastrians. The challenge facing him was therefore to make Norfolk's interests his own, and to remain a loyal servant of the house of Lancaster without appearing biased towards those already serving the duchy.

In this endeavour he was undoubtedly successful. He arbitrated a variety of disputes in the county between the usurpation and his death in 1428, including placating the citizens of Bishop's Lynn, adjudicating between Judge William Paston and Walter Aslak, and on his own account informing the royal council of a fracas involving Sir Thomas Kerdiston and Sir John Howard, which he feared might engender factionalism within the county.¹²³ Additionally, he maintained longstanding ties to the city of Norwich, leaving in his will a variety of bequests to urban religious institutions.¹²⁴ Sir Thomas Erpingham was thus very much the public face of Norfolk, as well as the county's primary link to the Lancastrian court. The associations that developed around him consequently possessed a political dimension that was far more overt than say the vertical affiliations of lord to tenant. From the moment of the usurpation, Erpingham was constantly sought after by all and sundry as a witness, feoffee, and executor,¹²⁵ while anyone regularly involved in county office would have worked with him at some point.¹²⁶ In other words, Erpingham's court connections

¹²² Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 59-81.

¹²³ *CPR, 1401-5*, p. 274; *Calendar of Signet Letters*, ed. Kirby, p. 189; *PL*, ed. Davis, i, no. 5; BL, Cott. Cal. D. iii. 159.

¹²⁴ *Chichele Reg.*, ii, pp. 378-81.

¹²⁵ E.g. BL, Stowe Ch. 177; Oxford: Magdalen College, Guton Deeds 73, no. 308.

¹²⁶ Erpingham was named to every commission of the peace after the usurpation, as well as to numerous other local commissions. He was especially active during the

introduced a patronal element to his horizontal associations that was liable to make his private business dealings more 'instrumental' than 'affective'.¹²⁷

Individual gentry's choices of witnesses and feoffees for their wills, land transactions, and the like provide perhaps the clearest example of private relationships in action. When gentry transacted land, given the potential for future litigation between the participating parties, prudence dictated that each should choose witnesses whom they trusted. If their relations with their witnesses were primarily instrumental, then there was too great a danger that such men could be swayed by bribery or legal chicanery to turn upon their erstwhile friend. Trust was of even greater importance when choosing one's feoffees, since such men were granted wholesale rights over the property placed into their hands, and a duplicitous feoffee could cunningly steal the land in question while remaining carefully within the bounds of English Common Law.¹²⁸ Additionally, since a minor heir could only succeed to his estates upon attaining his majority, it was necessary to have trustworthy godparents and other witnesses to his baptism, who would verify at the appropriate moment that he had come of age.¹²⁹

The relative cohesion of Norfolk county society during the early Lancastrian period is at one level underscored by the reappearance time and again of the same

reign of Henry IV. *CPR, 1399-1401*, p. 561; *CPR, 1401-5*, pp. 128, 274, 280, 503; *CPR, 1405-8*, pp. 152, 154, 200, 494; *CPR, 1408-13*, pp. 65, 181, 205, 222, 226, 483.

¹²⁷ Philippa Maddern drew a distinction in her analysis of Norfolk friendship circles between 'instrumental' and 'affective' friendship - the former reflecting mutual association or assistance (such as two parties in a business transaction), the latter reflecting genuine affection between those involved (such as the affection felt by a devoted father for his son). Maddern, 'Best Trusted Friends', pp. 100-17.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-13. A fine example of the inherent dangers of misplaced trust was Thomas Daniel's dubious acquisition of several manors granted to him temporarily by Henry Wodehouse. Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 120-1.

¹²⁹ M. J. Bennett, 'Spiritual Kinship and the Baptismal Name in Traditional European Society', *Principalities, Powers and Estates: Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Government and Society*, ed. L. O. Frappell (Adelaide, 1979), pp. 1-13; P. Niles, 'Baptism and the Naming of Children in Late Medieval England', *Medieval Prosopography*, iii, i (1982), 95-108; L. Haas, 'Social Connections between Parents and Godparents in Late Medieval Yorkshire', *Medieval Prosopography*, x, i (1989), 1-21.

names in the land settlements of the greater gentry.¹³⁰ For Sir Thomas Erpingham, however, it is equally apparent that he was utilised as a witness and feoffee even by well-to-do families with whom he was not especially close. A good example, ironically involving the Lords Morley, was a complicated transaction made in 1417, regarding the payment of rents from the Morley estates of Buxton and Hingham, between Isabella, widow of Thomas, fourth Lord Morley, and eight local figures, headed by her brother, William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk.¹³¹ This was a private business deal and the participating gentry families had never been especially close to the house of Lancaster. Nevertheless, Erpingham headed the list of nineteen gentry who witnessed and confirmed the settlement. Moreover, his fellow witnesses included his nephew, Sir William Phelip, and the Lancastrian bureaucrat, Edmund Oldhall.¹³² These three participated alongside the current heads of the old knightly families of Stapelton and Inglose, who possessed no particular pre-existing Lancastrian affiliations, and whose relations with the Morleys were long-term and extended back into the previous century.¹³³

In this context, given the blatantly instrumental aspect to Sir Thomas Erpingham's horizontal social relations after 1399, if one wishes to investigate the social networks that shaped his private concerns, the surest method is to look back to the fourteenth century, before he became a man of such importance. It is there, in northeast Norfolk around the hundred of Erpingham, that his most intimate associations were forged. Similarly, if one wishes to investigate the Morleys' private ties amongst Norfolk's county elite - those ties which had the least to do with their family's public persona as lords, military captains and county administrators - then one must turn to the areas surrounding the Morleys' estates in central and southern Norfolk, where several distinguished knightly families interacted on a close personal

¹³⁰ These were primarily men with Lancastrian affiliations. Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 64-7.

¹³¹ NRO, (Phillips) Phi65/576/9 (single parchment).

¹³² For Phelip's career, see *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, pp. 71-4. For Oldhall's career, see *The House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, pp. 870-2.

¹³³ For the Stapeltons, see: Lee-Warner, 'The Stapletons of Ingham', 182-223. The Ingloses had long been a prominent knightly family in the county. E.g. Sir John Inglose witnessed a land transaction between John Berney, future steward of Edward the Black Prince, and Sir William Calthorpe in c.1352. *CAD*, i, C867; earlier still, in the 1330s, a certain Sir Henry Inglose married Amy, daughter of the Morleys' close associate, Sir Roger Geney. Oxford: Magdalen College, Guton Deeds 196, no. 327.

level with them over multiple generations. It is with the examination, separately as case studies, of both the Morleys' and Erpingham's private circles that the remainder of this chapter is concerned.

The Morley Circle

Although knightly families possessing the regional status enjoyed by the Morleys were inevitably going to be involved together in war and administration over succeeding generations, to a remarkable degree it is evident that members of these families remained helpful to one another for reasons that appear to have been private rather than public, and which one could argue reflected the existence of trust between the two. No better example of this may be found than in the relationship between the Morleys and their neighbours, the Kerdistons.¹³⁴ As we have seen, Robert, second Lord Morley, and Sir William Kerdiston II were leading commanders during the early phase of the Hundred Years War, and also sat together in public office in their native Norfolk. The bonds between them ran far deeper than this though. Morley was a dozen years Kerdiston's senior and had in his early adulthood transacted land and acted as a witness alongside Sir William's father, Roger, who was a justice of the King's Bench.¹³⁵ Morley, moreover, had been one of those who in 1328 had formally confirmed that William had come of age - he may have been his godfather - and nine years later, his name appears in William's dealings when organising his newly acquired inheritance after his father's death.¹³⁶ From this time until Morley's own death in 1360, the two men followed the same pattern of close personal ties that Morley had established with Roger Kerdiston - while also sitting on judicial commissions, acting as peace commissioners, and holding responsibility for coastal defence.¹³⁷

Even after the deaths of both Robert and William within two years of each other, their sons, grandsons and great-grandsons maintained a tight-knit family association.¹³⁸ William Kerdiston III continued to hold land at Bricham and Naunton

¹³⁴ For the Kerdistons' landed wealth, see *CIPM*, xi, pp. 72-8.

¹³⁵ E.g. *CPR*, 1330-4, pp. 287, 296; *CIPM*, viii, p. 74.

¹³⁶ *CIPM*, xi, pp. 74-5.

¹³⁷ E.g. *CPR*, 1338-40, pp. 138-9.

¹³⁸ For the Kerdistons' genealogy, see Parsons, *Salle*, pp. 216-18.

from William, third Lord Morley,¹³⁹ which reminds one of the strong feudal element involved in their relationship, with the Morleys as lords and the Kerdistons at one level as merely one of their more important tenants. However other evidence makes it clear that the heads of these two families continued to intimately support each other as the generations rolled along. During the *Lovel v. Morley* Court of Chivalry dispute in 1386-7, William III's son, Sir Leonard Kerdiston, spoke on behalf of Thomas, fourth Lord Morley, and declared that he had served regularly under the Morley banner in war.¹⁴⁰ Half a dozen years later, this same Sir Leonard Kerdiston and Sir Robert Morley,¹⁴¹ Lord Thomas' uncle, jointly attempted to intercede in defence of the murdered Edmund Clippesby's widow, and were subsequently menaced by the servants of the Bishop of Norwich.¹⁴² Lastly, demonstrating the longevity of this family connection and the maintenance of close ties between their descendants, in 1422 Sir Thomas Kerdiston, Sir Leonard's son, transacted land with Thomas, fifth Lord Morley, while the latter was among those who received seisin of Kerdiston's estates after his death a few years later, and eventually had certain Kerdiston lands quitclaimed to him in 1433.¹⁴³ Additionally, as but one public expression of the bonds between their families, both the Morleys and Kerdistons were patrons of nearby Salle church, their arms, dating from this period, displayed above the west door.¹⁴⁴ Lordship was always evident in their relationship, but one may surely glean beyond this a more personal connection between these two families that transcended ancient feudal ties and the public duties of office holding and military service. After all, as the better-known relationship between Sir John Fastolf and William Worcester reminds one, 'affective' friendship could prevail between individuals or families of differing social rank.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ *CIPM*, xv, pp. 47-9.

¹⁴⁰ TNA, C47/6/1, no. 64.

¹⁴¹ This Sir Robert Morley was the second son of Robert, second Lord Morley, by his second wife, Joan. *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, ii, pp. 202-3.

¹⁴² Virgoe, 'The Murder of Edmund Clippesby', 303.

¹⁴³ *CAD*, iii, D433, D426; TNA, E210/10839.

¹⁴⁴ C. Pamela-Graves, *The Form and Fabric of Belief: An Archaeology of the Lay Experience of Religion in Medieval Norfolk and Devon* (British Archaeological Reports cccxi, Oxford, 2000), p. 85.

¹⁴⁵ For various examples of greater and lesser gentry friendship, see Moreton, 'A Social Gulf?', 255-62. For the Fastolf-Worcester relationship, see Chapter Seven.

More generally too, this singular, longstanding relationship between the Morleys and Kerdistons indirectly provides an insight into the form and function of local social networks. The Morleys' and Kerdistons' wider relations among their fellow gentry in south-central and south-east Norfolk followed much the same pattern and reflect the communal character of gentry social interaction at the local level, for these two families had a variety of friends and kinsfolk in common in their own part of the county. For instance, the old knightly families of Geney and Mortimer, with estates situated in the area, acted regularly as witnesses and feoffees for the Morleys and Kerdistons throughout the fourteenth century, while the Geneys in particular had been active in the king's wars alongside both families. Extending the connection a step further, the Ingloses, another family associated with the Morleys, were tied by marriage to the Geneys.¹⁴⁶ Three other knightly families, the Cursons, Gerberghs and Grooses, were all tenants of the Morleys and were regular participants in land transactions with them and other nearby prominent families.¹⁴⁷ The Cursons additionally shared with the Morleys an old attachment to the household of Thomas of Brotherton, earl of Norfolk, and Hugh Curson spoke for Thomas Lord Morley before the Court of Chivalry, attesting that he had undertaken most of his military service under Robert Lord Morley's close companion, Sir John Norwich.¹⁴⁸ The county's border represented no invisible barrier either. Gentry with estates predominantly in northern Suffolk, like the Whites of Stoke Nayland (who also held land in northeast

¹⁴⁶ The Kerdistons and Geneys had been witnessing land transactions together since the reign of Edward I and this relationship continued into the 1390s, at which time Geney was menaced by the bishop of Norwich's servants alongside Sir Leonard Kerdiston and Sir Robert Morley. *CAD*, i, C1013; *CAD*, ii, A2783; Oxford: Magdalen College, Hickling 149 (2), no. 209; Virgoe, 'The Murder of Edmund Clippesby', 303. In 1335 Constantine Mortimer witnessed a land transaction for Robert, second Lord Morley, acted as the latter's attorney prior to his proposed pilgrimage to Santiago, and also transacted land with Sir Roger Kerdiston. *CPR*, 1334-8, pp. 129-30, 162; TNA, E212/2, E212/12. Sir John Geney spoke alongside Thomas Lord Morley and Sir Leonard Kerdiston in defence of Sir Edward Hastings before the Court of Chivalry in 1407-10, while Sir Thomas Geney was among those old soldiers who testified in the Scrope-Grosvenor dispute a generation earlier. *PCM*, i, p. 425; *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, ii, p. 220. As we have seen, Sir Henry Inglose married Amy Geney during the early 1330s. Chapter Three, n. 131.

¹⁴⁷ *CIPM*, xiii, p. 282; *CIPM*, xv, pp. 47-9; *CPR*, 1370-4, p. 419; *CCR*, 1381-5, p. 420; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, vi, p. 344; Oxford: Magdalen College, Guton Deeds 20A, no. 292; Guton Deeds 24A, no. 197; Guton Deeds 147, no. 280; *CAD*, i, C1013; *CAD*, iii, D1139; TNA, E210/6455.

¹⁴⁸ Marshall, 'An Early Fourteenth-Century Affinity', p. 10; TNA, C47/6/1, no. 99.

Norfolk), the eponymous Ratlesdens, the Boyses and Brewses, and at a more exalted level, the Uffords and their cadets, became involved in local transactions of various kinds with the Morleys, Kerdistons and their Norfolk neighbours.¹⁴⁹ The Uffords too were connected to the Morleys through their ties with Thomas of Brotherton's affinity, and to the Kerdistons through their close relations with Edward the Black Prince, and these relationships too continued across the generations.¹⁵⁰ In 1354, for example, William, the future third Lord Morley, served in Gascony under Robert, earl of Suffolk, while the Uffords, as we shall see, later supported the Morleys in their Court of Chivalry dispute in 1386-7.¹⁵¹

Neighbourliness was evidently a key aspect of these relations. Their geographical proximity made these families the leaders in their particular part of East Anglia, and allowed them easy access to one another, which may largely explain why they so regularly are listed as one another's witnesses in legal records. Moreover, as we have seen, the Lords Morley fought in the Hundred Years War regularly over multiple generations and their Court of Chivalry dispute in 1386-7 reminds one of the important role of neighbours and tenants in filling out local knightly retinues. Several knights and esquires claimed long years of war service under the Morley banner, while a host of parish clergy living near the Morleys' numerous estates, as well as a number of Augustinian friars, whose houses the Morleys patronised, collectively gave evidence in their favour.¹⁵² Numerous lesser knights, esquires and clergy thus looked to the Morleys as their lords or benefactors, but scattered among them, speaking before the Court of Chivalry, were several more exalted members of East Anglia's knightly elite, including Sir John White, Sir Leonard Kerdiston, and Sir Robert Ufford.¹⁵³ Additionally, at least four of Robert Ufford, earl of Suffolk's, retainers also spoke for the Morleys.¹⁵⁴ Personal loyalties and local tight-knit associations between

¹⁴⁹ TNA, E210/6431; NRO, Phi/456 577x8; NRO, NCC Reg. Heydon, ff. 35, 37; CAD, i, A1430; Oxford: Magdalen College, Guton Deeds 20A, no. 292; TNA, C47/6/1, nos. 65, 102, 48.

¹⁵⁰ Marshall, 'An Early Fourteenth-Century Affinity', p. 4; Green, 'Edward the Black Prince and East Anglia', p. 86.

¹⁵¹ CP, ix, p. 215. For the Uffords' presence before the Court of Chivalry, see below.

¹⁵² See Chapter Six for a fuller analysis of this dispute.

¹⁵³ TNA, C47/6/1, nos. 65, 64, 48.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., nos. 13, 39, 42, 92.

the more prominent families of south-central Norfolk and northern Suffolk counted for plenty in this dispute.

These intensely localised connections were important, but they were not the only ties that acquainted the Morleys with other families from among the regional elite. A military dimension is particularly noticeable. The relations forged by the Morleys with Sir John Norwich, Sir Miles Stapelton, the Hastings of Elsing and Sir Thomas Felton were all to some extent based upon shared military experience in France.¹⁵⁵ All of these families had fought alongside the Morleys during the halcyon days of Edward III's reign. A generation later, the Breweses, Whites and Uffords recalled before the Court of Chivalry their campaigning days in the Morleys' company, while Lord Morley himself, alongside his kinsman, Sir Robert Morley, Sir Leonard Kerdiston and Sir John Geney, testified for Sir Edward Hastings in the latter's Court of Chivalry dispute from 1407.¹⁵⁶ For these families, their longstanding affiliations in time of war and in local office provided a basis around which longer term domestically-based associations could take root. These domestically-based associations are most clearly visible in the regular assistance these families offered each other in land transactions and other private business deals over the generations.¹⁵⁷ Such ties were, moreover, oftentimes publicly attested, for these families, like the Morleys and Kerdistons in Salle Church, displayed their armorial bearings in the same urban and parish churches as a mark of their friendship.¹⁵⁸ Beyond this, they on occasion blatantly did favours for one another. For example, in 1359, Robert Lord Morley employed as rector of his family's church at Hingham, Master John Ufford, a son of his old wartime comrade, Robert, earl of Suffolk.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ *Foedera*, iii, 120; Lee-Warner, 'The Stapletons of Ingham', 200; *CP*, vii, p. 63; TNA, C76/38, m. 16; C76/52, m. 10; Morgan, 'Sir Thomas Felton', *ODNB*, ix, pp. 286-7.

¹⁵⁶ Sir John White, Sir John Brewes and Sir Robert Ufford all stated that they had campaigned alongside members of the Morley family. TNA, C47/6/1, nos. 65, 102, 48; *PCM*, i, pp. 435-9, 421-3, 456-7, 425.

¹⁵⁷ E.g. BL, Add Ch. 10314; BL, Stowe Ch. 176; Oxford: Magdalen College, Hickling 60, no. 220; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, ii, p. 213; *CFR*, 1356-68, p. 253; Oxford: Magdalen College, Hickling 80, no. 232; Guton Deeds 73, no. 308; *PCM*, i, pp. 435-9, 456-7.

¹⁵⁸ E.g. At churches in Banham and Attleborough. Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, pp. 355-7, 522-30; Pamela-Graves, *The Form and Fabric of Belief*, p. 85.

¹⁵⁹ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, ii, pp. 423-4.

The social circle of the Morleys of Hingham underscores the dual role played by this baronial family in Norfolk society. At a public level, they interacted widely with their fellow office holding elite, conducting the day-to-day running of the shire. Beyond Norfolk's borders, their regular participation on military ventures reinforced the ties they had already developed in the administrative sphere with other knights from the county. They were, moreover, amongst the region's foremost landholders and naturally turned to their neighbours of similar wealth and status for assistance in their private business transactions. Most of these men besides had served with them in war or in county office, or both. Lastly, alongside their relations with nearby elites, the Morleys appear to have developed neighbourly associations with lesser gentry, especially their tenants, who would have been the people with whom they interacted most regularly on a daily basis. Such lesser figures, not necessarily in a very dissimilar position to great tenants like the Kerdistons, looked to the Morleys as their lord. Many would have fleshed out the Morleys' military retinue as campaigning seasons approached and, judging by the regularity with which they appeared in the Morleys' private land transactions, they were evidently considered trustworthy. In this sense their relationship with the Morleys, although ostensibly the unequal association of lord with tenant, was seemingly not without trust and, if the presence of such men before the Court of Chivalry is any indication, loyalty.¹⁶⁰ The Morleys possessed friends among the higher nobility and were strongly connected by blood and marriage to their fellow barons.¹⁶¹ Yet if the Kerdiston, Norwich, Geney, Ufford and Hastings examples in particular provide any sort of indication, the Morleys relied not only upon men of equal or greater rank to themselves, but drew into their orbit, in a manner both horizontal and vertical in tone, a variety of prominent knights, some of whom lived near their estates in southern and central Norfolk, but who all privately supported them in their business transactions, served alongside them in war and public office, and spoke on their behalf before the Court of Chivalry when the Morleys' honour was at stake.

¹⁶⁰ See Moreton, 'A Social Gulf?', 255-62. For evidence of lesser gentry wholeheartedly supporting the Morleys before the Court of Chivalry, see Chapter Six.

¹⁶¹ The Morleys were tied by marriage to the de la Pole earls of Suffolk, as well as the Lords Mohaut, Marshall, Bardolf, Despenser and Roos. *CP*, ix, pp. 211-19.

The Erpingham Circle

Sir Thomas Erpingham, as we have seen, was intimately connected with the house of Lancaster for almost half a century. He was one of only a handful of John of Gaunt's followers who selected a fellow Lancastrian as the executor of his will.¹⁶² Most of his oldest associates were likewise members of the Lancastrian affinity.¹⁶³ They would have joined Erpingham in paying suit at courts held by the duchy of Lancaster and they would have collectively attended banquets and tournaments hosted by the duke, doubtless receiving *bouche de court* as part of his riding retinue.¹⁶⁴ They held duchy offices and the men-at-arms among them served their lord in war.¹⁶⁵ Additionally, of course, it was through Henry of Bolingbroke's rise to the throne that Erpingham was able to achieve his pre-eminent position in Norfolk society, and it was through their Lancastrian affiliations that his associates were able to grab onto his coattails and join him as part of the shire's governing elite.¹⁶⁶ To a significant degree, therefore, membership of the Lancastrian affinity played a decisive role in shaping the social circle that surrounded Sir Thomas Erpingham. What will be argued here, however, is that despite its overtly political character, there was more to Erpingham's social circle than ties of service to the house of Lancaster, and for his oldest companions, service to duchy interests was just one of many things that they had in common.

The gentry of northeast Norfolk lived in the heartland of the duchy estates of John of Gaunt, and Sir Thomas Erpingham was just one of several young men from the region who entered Gaunt's service during the 1370s and 1380s.¹⁶⁷ Others who followed this career path included Erpingham's childhood neighbours, Sir Robert Berney of Gunton and Great Witchingham, the lawyer John Winter of Town Barningham, and Sir Simon Felbrigg of Felbrigg, as well as Sir John Strange of Hunstanton, who lived in west Norfolk, but whose kinsman, Sir Thomas Morieux,

¹⁶² *Reg. Chichele*, ii, pp. 378-81.

¹⁶³ See below.

¹⁶⁴ Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 82, 95-6.

¹⁶⁵ See below.

¹⁶⁶ See Chapter Two.

¹⁶⁷ For further details, see Chapter Four.

was a leading Lancastrian soldier.¹⁶⁸ Berney, Felbrigg, and Strange participated with Erpingham on John of Gaunt's Castilian ventures in the late 1380s,¹⁶⁹ and Winter, for his part, became a valued duchy official, serving as receiver and steward of Gaunt's estates in Norfolk, interspersed with stints in county office.¹⁷⁰ In their private concerns, these five families acted regularly for one another in their business transactions. In 1392 John Winter's father, William, quitclaimed the manor of East Beckham to Erpingham, Berney, Erpingham's brother-in-law, William Phelip, and Sir George Felbrigg.¹⁷¹ A generation earlier, William Winter had been an executor of the will of Berney's father, John.¹⁷² When Winter himself made his will in 1397, Sir Robert Berney was chosen alongside Erpingham as one of his overseers.¹⁷³ Perhaps most indicative of their ongoing friendship is the fact that when Erpingham went into voluntary exile with Bolingbroke in 1398, Berney, Felbrigg, Winter and Strange were among his trustees.¹⁷⁴ His choice of Sir Simon Felbrigg is especially telling, since the latter had moved into Ricardian service and was thus a loyal retainer of the very man responsible for Bolingbroke's banishment.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, such was the tight-knit nature of the relations between these families that in early 1399, while Erpingham was still in exile, Berney, himself an avowed Lancastrian, acted as an attorney for Felbrigg prior to his departure on Richard II's ill-fated Irish campaign.¹⁷⁶

After 1399, Erpingham's old friends, most of whom were anyway fellow Lancastrians, naturally became central figures on the Norfolk political scene. All served regularly as peace commissioners and held such high-ranking positions as

¹⁶⁸ TNA, DL29/289/4744 m. 4; NRO, (Norfolk Record Society) NRS 15171 m. 1; *PCM*, i, pp. 443-4; *JGReg*, (1372-6), no. 853; *JGReg* (1379-83), p. 8.

¹⁶⁹ *PCM*, i, pp. 443-4, 439-42, 474-6; TNA, C76/70 m. 11.

¹⁷⁰ TNA, DL29/289/4744 m. 1; Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, i, p. 594; Winter was twice escheator for Norfolk and Suffolk and seven times an M.P. for Norfolk. *List of Escheators*, p. 86; Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, pp. 45-6.

¹⁷¹ NRO, (Phillips) Phi32078, no. 61.

¹⁷² NRO, NCC Reg. Heydon, ff. 42-3.

¹⁷³ NRO, NCC Reg. Harsyk, ff. 240-1.

¹⁷⁴ *CFR*, 1422-30, p. 130; TNA, C139/23/31.

¹⁷⁵ *CCR*, 1396-9, pp. 399-400; Milner, 'Sir Simon Felbrigg K.G.', 84-6. The families of Erpingham and Felbrigg had a long history of association with one another. For example, Master John Felbrigg, clerk, transacted land at Calthorpe with Sir John and Sir Robert Erpingham earlier in the fourteenth century. *CAD*, ii, C2266.

¹⁷⁶ *CPR*, 1396-9, pp. 554, 579.

M.P., sheriff and escheator.¹⁷⁷ First Winter and then Berney became Erpingham's deputy in the prestigious offices of warden of the Cinque Ports and constable of Dover Castle.¹⁷⁸ Winter, moreover, was appointed steward of the Duchy of Cornwall and a 'king's esquire'.¹⁷⁹ Each additionally received fees and annuities from the duchy of Lancaster and/or the Crown.¹⁸⁰ Felbrigg's survival in particular appears to have rested largely upon his friendship with Erpingham. As he was a stalwart of Richard II, the overthrow of his master potentially placed him in a most precarious position. Yet although Felbrigg lost many of the outstanding gifts, grants and offices that had come his way under Richard,¹⁸¹ he nonetheless was still transacting land with his old friends in the years after 1399,¹⁸² and by 1407 was back playing a prominent role as a peace commissioner in the county.¹⁸³ Indeed, upon Erpingham's death, Felbrigg acted as one of his executors, a display of trust illustrative of a tie that had endured and survived factional politics.¹⁸⁴

The relationship between Sir Thomas Erpingham and his northeast Norfolk neighbours reinforces the portrait already painted of the social ties forged by the Morleys with their closest associates. These two social networks highlight that in the harsh world of county politics and gentry business dealings on the land and marriage markets, the county elite required close associates whom they could genuinely trust, and it was these men with whom they interacted over the longest periods of time. Erpingham and his nearest companions did not comprise a closed social circle however. A variety of other gentry of the same generation were also quite clearly part of this trusted network of associates and after 1399 represented the inner core of

¹⁷⁷ *CPR, 1399-1401*, p. 561; *CPR, 1405-8*, p. 494; Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, pp. 45-6; *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87; *List of Escheators*, pp. 86-7.

¹⁷⁸ *CPR, 1399-1401*, p. 389; *CCR, 1399-1402*, pp. 171, 392.

¹⁷⁹ *CPR, 1399-1401*, p. 1.

¹⁸⁰ Winter received an annuity of five marks in 1399, while Berney was granted the substantial annuity of £40. *CCR, 1399-1402*, p. 392; TNA, DL42/17 f. 26.

¹⁸¹ Milner argued that Felbrigg suffered as a result of his Ricardian affiliations. Milner, 'Sir Simon Felbrigg K.G.', 86. Castor more convincingly suggested that Felbrigg's friendship with Erpingham largely protected his position in Norfolk county society. Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 67.

¹⁸² E.g. Berney assisted Erpingham in the purchase of Blickling manor in 1407 and in 1409 sold his family's house in Norwich to Erpingham. *CCR, 1409-13*, pp. 225, 226, 229, 234; *Records of the City of Norwich*, ii, pp. 56-7, 59-60.

¹⁸³ *CPR, 1405-8*, p. 494.

¹⁸⁴ *Reg. Chichele.*, ii, p. 381.

Erpingham's circle. In particular, old Lancastrians - Sir John White, Oliver Groos, John Reymes, Edmund Barry, Edmund Gournay and Edmund Oldhall - figure prominently with Erpingham and his cohorts in land transactions and the holding of public office.

To a significant extent, their relations very likely derived from their mutual service to the Lancastrian affinity, and it was certainly the case that the Erpingham clique was a loose extension of the authority of the Crown and, more particularly, the house of Lancaster. Sir John White possessed estates at Hautbois, Lammas and Scottow, north of Norwich, and carved out a notable career for himself in Lancastrian service, acting as John of Gaunt's bailiff at Gimingham and as feodary of all of Gaunt's Norfolk estates, while also fighting in Gaunt's company in Scotland and Castile.¹⁸⁵ Edmund Barry, who hailed from Hertfordshire but had been retained by Gaunt, had likewise fought under him in France and Spain in the company of Erpingham, Berney and Felbrigg, and would later see his daughter, Agnes, settle in northeast Norfolk as the wife of Judge William Paston.¹⁸⁶ Oliver Groos of Sloley was another long-serving Lancastrian who had undertaken Gaunt's military expedition to Castile and became an active county administrator in his later years.¹⁸⁷ The Reymeses were an ancient knightly family, hailing from Overstrand, whose late fourteenth-century heir, John Reymes, served Gaunt in peace and war, was granted an annuity for his good service, and later became a 'king's esquire' to Henry IV.¹⁸⁸ Edmund Gournay and Edmund Oldhall, for their part, were zealous duchy administrators, acting as steward and receiver respectively of Gaunt's East Anglian estates.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, v, pp. 504-5; x, pp. 331, 418-19; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, pp. 829-30; *JGReg (1379-83)*, i, nos. 199, 618; ii, no. 831; Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, i, p. 378; *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, ii, pp. 196-7; TNA, C76/70 m. 28.

¹⁸⁶ *PL*, ed. Davis, i, p. liii; *PCM*, i, pp. 392-5.

¹⁸⁷ TNA, C76/70 m. 17; *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87; *List of Escheators*, p. 87; Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, p. 46.

¹⁸⁸ TNA, C81/1040 (24); NRO, (Norfolk Record Society) NRS 3344 m. 2; *CPR, 1399-1401*, pp. 87, 133, 393.

¹⁸⁹ NRO, (Norfolk Record Society) NRS 3342 m.1; Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, i, pp. 377, 596.

Bonds of kinship and association further tightened this broadly Lancastrian social circle. Oliver Groos married Sir John White's daughter, Joan.¹⁹⁰ Groos also purchased land and acted as a mainpernor for John Reymes, who was brother-in-law to John Winter.¹⁹¹ Both Reymes and White were named as executors of William Winter's will alongside Erpingham, Berney and Winter's son, John.¹⁹² Reymes additionally witnessed Erpingham's transfer of his lands to feoffees in 1398.¹⁹³ In 1406, when John Gournay, son of Edmund, enfeoffed his estate of Loundhall at Saxthorpe, his feoffees included Erpingham, Berney and Winter.¹⁹⁴ Gournay was also close to Sir John Strange, a connection possibly forged by their families' close relationship with Strange's kinsmen, the Feltons of Litcham.¹⁹⁵ In 1409 John Winter transferred land to Erpingham and Berney in an arrangement that included Edmund Oldhall and which was witnessed by Sir Simon Felbrigg and Winter's brother, Edmund.¹⁹⁶ Four years later, a coterie of Norfolk gentry, headed by Erpingham, Berney, Felbrigg, Oldhall and John Winter, purchased from the Crown a number of escheated properties in East Anglia, including some held by the recently deceased Sir Robert Morley.¹⁹⁷ Additionally most of these families were entertained at the breakfast given by the citizens of Norwich and like Erpingham were closely associated with that city.¹⁹⁸ Lastly, demonstrating the longevity of this social circle, the two longest-lived members of Erpingham's generation, Sir Simon Felbrigg and Oliver Groos, were evidently still firm friends long after their circle had disintegrated, for Groos acted as a feoffee for Felbrigg's estates and an executor of his will in 1443, and around this time was also still conveying land with Erpingham's nephew, Sir William Phelip.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁰ *Calendar of Papal Registers, Papal Letters*, v, p. 229.

¹⁹¹ BL, Add. Ch. 14665; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 251; Raimes, 'Reymes of Overstrand', pp. 29-33.

¹⁹² NRO, NCC Reg. Harsyk, ff. 240-1.

¹⁹³ *CFR, 1422-30*, p. 130; TNA, C139/23/31.

¹⁹⁴ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 256.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ BL, Stowe. Ch. 177.

¹⁹⁷ *CPR, 1408-13*, p. 469.

¹⁹⁸ *Records of the City of Norwich*, ii, p. 41.

¹⁹⁹ *Testamenta Vetusta*, ed. N. H. Nicolas (London, 1826), i, pp. 245-6; *CCR, 1441-7*, p. 22.

Erpingham's social circle had an all-encompassing quality to it. At its heart lay dutiful service to the duchy of Lancaster and, just as importantly, neighbourliness and longstanding family ties. Although Erpingham's oldest and most trusted associates were undoubtedly those who hailed from northeast Norfolk, who had fought alongside him on John of Gaunt's military expeditions, and who had served as Lancastrian administrators, the traditional county elite, essentially comprising long-established knightly families, rapidly became embedded within this clique, even if they had never previously been strongly associated with Erpingham or the Lancastrian affinity.²⁰⁰ Several examples illustrate this point. John Lancaster, a diligent servant of the house of Mowbray, acted as a feoffee for John Winter.²⁰¹ Winter, Felbrigg and Oliver Groos all acted in the same capacity for another Mowbray retainer, William Rees, while Sir John Ingoldesthorpe, head of one of Norfolk's oldest knightly families, likewise used Erpingham, Felbrigg and Strange as his feoffees.²⁰² Sir Ralph Shelton II, son of a follower of Edward the Black Prince, participated on Gaunt's Spanish venture, and during the 1390s oversaw William Winter's will and witnessed Erpingham's transfer of his lands prior to his exile.²⁰³ Sir John Curson had been a fellow trustee of the Felton estates with Erpingham, and within months of the usurpation had secured the latter's services as a feoffee, while his son, John Curson jr, undertook the Agincourt campaign in Erpingham's retinue.²⁰⁴ Sir Miles Stapelton, whose estates at Ingham were situated in the county's northeast, also used his Lancastrian neighbours in his land transactions, was a kinsman of Oliver Groos, and was married to Sir Simon Felbrigg's daughter.²⁰⁵ Members of the Morley circle too, like Sir Thomas Kerdiston and even Thomas, fourth Lord Morley, himself, similarly utilised Erpingham and his friends in their land transactions.²⁰⁶ Indeed Kerdiston witnessed Erpingham's will in 1428,²⁰⁷ which in itself underscores that the latter's

²⁰⁰ One finds, for example, that most Lancastrian knights married into miscellaneous East Anglian knightly families from beyond the affinity. Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, p. 193.

²⁰¹ *CPR, 1408-13*, p. 71.

²⁰² *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 188; ii, p. 476.

²⁰³ TNA, C76/70 m. 20; NRO, NCC Reg. Harsyk, ff. 240-1; *CFR, 1422-30*, p. 130; TNA, C139/23/31.

²⁰⁴ *CPR, 1396-9*, p. 586; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1883), Appendix, p. 568.

²⁰⁵ E.g. Oxford: Magdalen College, Hickling 109, no. 238; Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 76n.

²⁰⁶ TNA, E326/13549; NRO, (Phillips) Phi65/576/9 (single parchment).

²⁰⁷ *Reg. Chichele*, ii, p. 381.

social circle after 1399 was certainly not entirely a Lancastrian clique, but encompassed leading families from across the county. Lastly, when the dedicated Lancastrian family, the Hastings of Elsing, were challenged before the Court of Chivalry, their testators included not only soldiers from Gaunt's military retinue, like Erpingham, Felbrigg, Sir Robert Berney, John Reymes, Edmund Barry and John Payn II, but also members of Norfolk's established knightly elite, like Thomas, fourth Lord Morley, Sir Leonard Kerdiston, Sir Robert Morley, Sir Miles Stapelton, Sir Thomas Gerbergh, Sir John Geney, Sir William Calthorpe, Sir Ralph Shelton II, and Constantine Mortimer, whose connections with the Hastings were decidedly un-Lancastrian.²⁰⁸

It would prove a hazardous exercise to attempt to tease out the affective friendships prevalent amongst this myriad of primarily instrumental associations. A number of these gentry possessed lands in north Norfolk; several of the county's established knightly elite had seen war service alongside Erpingham and his fellow Lancastrian soldiers; most importantly, these families were leading members of Norfolk county society, with a voice in local politics and sufficient social weight that their interests could not be ignored. It suited their purposes to utilise the services of professional lawyers, bureaucrats and court favourites in their land transactions, just as these connections were reciprocally a boon to men like Erpingham, for whom service had opened up their road to social advancement, but whose lineage and family achievements were far less prestigious than those of the county's established elite. In its composition, therefore, the Erpingham circle centred around a select group of old Lancastrian retainers, but its character did not purely reflect Lancastrian concerns. Rather, it broadly encompassed Norfolk's greater gentry *en masse* and in social terms engendered political cohesion, rooted in loyalty to the new Lancastrian regime that was broad-based and open to both the established non-Lancastrian elite and to the inevitable *parvenus* who were seeking to make their fortunes through their chosen vocation.

Conclusion

²⁰⁸ *PCM*, i, pp. 439-42, 443-4, 474-6, 444-5, 392-5, 502-4, 435-9, 456-7, 421-3, 442-3, 498-500, 425, 457-8, 423-4, 509-11. For a more detailed analysis of the East Anglian dimension to this dispute, see Chapters Four and Six.

It is far easier to describe than to define Norfolk's county elite. Land was the foremost marker of wealth and prosperity amongst the regional gentry, and the county elite were Norfolk's principal landholders, possessing estates in various areas around the shire, and quite often too having landed interests beyond its borders. These prominent families advertised their prosperity by living in grand manor houses and imposing castles, which reminded their neighbours and tenants that they were, in the most local of contexts, the pre-eminent lords in the locality. Vocation also broadly bound these families together. Soldiers shared the battlefields of France and Scotland; lawyers and judges the courthouses of East Anglia and London; and greater gentry of all professions, as we shall see, enjoyed the good graces of the higher nobility, whom they served in peace and war. Additionally, county office holding as J.P.s, M.P.s, sheriffs, and commissioners of array, officially attested that these families were perceived as leaders of Norfolk society by both the Crown and their fellow gentry, who trusted them with positions of authority and responsibility in regional affairs. Finally, in the elitist atmosphere of English society during this epoch, in which wealth, prestige and honour commingled to determine a family's position on the social scale, the county elite naturally sought to maintain themselves. In this vein, powerful families of similar income and status intermarried extensively, creating blood ties that loosely connected the county elite as a whole. At the same time, as individual families lapsed for want of male issue, or slumped into decline for whatever reason, new families were waiting to usurp their place, buying into the land market or marrying their way into the elite with the money and influence they had acquired through their careers in war, law, commerce and administration.

It is, moreover, a point of the utmost importance that established and prosperous knights like the Lords Morley and Sir Thomas Erpingham, and many of their friends and associates, had a foot respectively in two worlds that have all too often been treated as separate. They were politicians, administrators, and local lords on the Norfolk domestic scene, but, as we shall see in the ensuing chapters, they were also chivalrous warriors at the forefront of Norfolk's (and East Anglia's) regional 'military community'. The social circles of the Morleys and Erpingham show that their military associations were important, although not necessarily predominant, factors in shaping their social relations. In the next chapter, one will investigate in greater detail how the vertical ties of affinity imprinted themselves upon the county

elite's complex and multi-layered social networks, especially since the higher nobility were not only political leaders, but were also the largest-scale military recruiters in the realm.

MAGNATE SERVICE

In the previous chapter we saw how Norfolk's warrior gentry interacted at the shire level, forming networks and associations based upon kinship, marriage, neighbourliness, shared office-holding experience and, most centrally for our purposes, joint military service. Of equal importance in engendering a sense of cohesion and community amongst the county's military elite, and in particular in enhancing their military careers, was their service in war and peace in the retinues of the county's resident and non-resident nobility. All over the realm these lordly associations lingered constantly in the background, shadowing the horizontal ties that prevailed amongst the upper echelons of county society.¹ This lordly presence was more overt in some counties than others, but it was never entirely absent.² In Norfolk the higher nobility acquired some of their most prominent retainers from the county, while also employing the services of a variety of Norfolk men from beyond their immediate following on an *ad hoc* basis. Yet the nobility's political influence over the shire was minimal.

In this chapter the magnate-gentry dynamic will be approached in a primarily socio-military context. Its overarching purpose will be to investigate not so much the politics of lordship, but rather the ways in which the social, military and chivalric connections between Norfolk's magnates and the county's warrior gentry worked. Nigel Saul, for one, has shown how important magnate militarism was to the Gloucestershire gentry.³ Saul found that all but a handful of his militarily-active gentry were tied to magnate affinities and that their impressive war records were almost exclusively carved out beneath the banner of a single warrior magnate.⁴ This

¹ See Appendices IIIa and IIIb for the major offices and annuities granted to prominent Norfolk knights and esquires.

² For some of the starker regional variations, see C. Carpenter, 'The Beauchamp Affinity, a Study of Bastard Feudalism at Work', *EHR*, xc (1980), 514-32; Cherry, 'The Courtenay Earls of Devon', 71-99; Payling, *Political Society in Lancastrian England*, pp. 87-90, 104-8; Acheson, *A Gentry Community*, pp. 17-28, 201-3. See also, Saul, *Knights and Esquires*, pp. 258-62; Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 250-6.

³ Saul, *Knights and Esquires*, pp. 53-4.

⁴ *Ibid.*

connection appears equally true amongst Norfolk's greater gentry. By offering career opportunities as soldiers, councillors and administrators to the county's armigerous elite, the nobility directly impacted upon both Norfolk's county community and its military community. In this sense, Norfolk's warrior gentry were uniquely placed to benefit from lordly sponsorship, since they were available to provide their lords with advice and administrative assistance in peace, but could also bear arms beneath their lord's banner in time of war.

This chapter will be divided into three sections. The first section will expand upon the comments made in Chapter Two regarding the nobility's role in Norfolk society, for magnate priorities ultimately determined their recruiting policies in any given region, and it is with magnate military recruitment in particular that this chapter is concerned. The second section will investigate the nature of patronage and reward for services in peace and war amongst Norfolk's county elite. The final section will situate the above factors in a social and cultural context. Its focus will be upon the importance of magnate militarism to the military participation of Norfolk's gentry, evaluating the role played by the nobility in facilitating - through their affinities - the development of a certain *esprit de corps* amongst sections of the county's warrior elite. The purpose of this chapter, then, will be to show that magnate service provided an avenue through which many of Norfolk's greater gentry could prosper, and, more particularly, through which numerous gentry soldiers could carve out their military careers, in the process acquiring profit, prestige and wartime companionship.

Magnate Influence

As we saw in Chapter Two, several non-resident magnates - including Edward the Black Prince, the dukes of Lancaster, the earls of Arundel, the earls of Oxford, and the earls of March - maintained a landed interest in East Anglia intermittently between 1350 and 1430. Margaret of Brotherton, countess of Norfolk, and the Ufford earls of Suffolk, were the pre-eminent resident magnates in the region for much of the mid-to-late fourteenth century. Margaret's grandson, Thomas Mowbray, also took an active interest in his future inheritance from the late 1380s onwards, while the Ricardian royal favourites, the de la Poles, supplanted the extinct Uffords as earls of Suffolk from 1385. The Mowbrays and de la Poles would continue to play an

important role in the shire until well after 1430, although their fortunes fluctuated considerably during this time.⁵

In general terms these numerous magnate families cooperated fitfully with one another as far as their East Anglian interests were concerned. A handful of examples suffice to illustrate the point. Robert Ufford, earl of Suffolk, received as a gift from the Black Prince in 1358 “a bascinet with a rentaille of steel”. Aside from being his comrade-in-arms, Suffolk was also titular chief of the Prince’s council, and the Norfolk stewards of the Prince and the earl appear to have worked well with one another at the behest of their employers.⁶ In equally amiable fashion, John of Gaunt sometimes exchanged gifts with Margaret of Brotherton, while Henry of Bolingbroke placed his son, John, the future duke of Bedford, in Margaret’s household.⁷ Relations were naturally not always so amicable. This was particularly the case during the Appellant crisis, when Arundel, Bolingbroke and Mowbray were pitted against King Richard, and when, in later years, the quarrel between the latter two Appellants reached the point that they were prepared to settle their differences via judicial combat.⁸ These were essentially matters of high politics however, and given that their Norfolk affairs were never of central importance to these great lords, there is unsurprisingly nothing in their relationships that overtly spilled over onto the Norfolk scene, as did the factional violence and litigation between the duke of Norfolk and the earl of Suffolk after 1430.⁹

Before proceeding any further, some description of the broad structures of late medieval magnate affinities needs to be provided, for these generalisations can then be related more specifically to the individual affinities that were actually present in Norfolk.¹⁰ In practice, there were various ways in which ties could be forged between

⁵ See Chapter Two.

⁶ *BPReg*, iv, pp. 144, 246, 31, 352.

⁷ TNA, DL28/1/4 ff. 17v-18; DL28/1/6 ff. 7v, 24r-v, 31-3, 46; DL28/1/9 f. 15.

⁸ Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility*, pp. 187-213.

⁹ For the Mowbray and de la Pole rivalry, see Chapter Seven.

¹⁰ For what follows, see esp. McFarlane, ‘Bastard Feudalism’, pp. 23-43; Bean, *From Lord To Patron*; Harriss, ‘Introduction’, pp. ix-xxvii; Carpenter, ‘The Beauchamp Affinity’, 514-32; Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 1-18, 81-116; Jones and Walker, ‘Introduction’, *Private Indentures for Life Service in Peace and War*, pp. 9-33.

a magnate and those gentry who served him. Firstly, living in closest proximity to their lord were his household attendants. These included not only administrators and menial servants, but also knights and esquires who lived with their lord, received *bouche de court* and acted as members of his riding retinue. They may have been granted robes, would likely have worn his livery badge, and would have accompanied him in bulk on diplomatic and military expeditions, as well as to festivals and tournaments. Secondly, there were indentured retainers. These men too could be granted *bouche de court* or receive their lord's livery. They were usually employed in peace and war, although sometimes, especially in the case of highly active knights, their services were only required for military ventures. Thirdly, there were to be found a variety of estates officials; some were knights and esquires fulfilling their peacetime function, but many were lawyers or professional bureaucrats. In their midst too would have been found various gentry whose relationship to the lord in question was purely tenurial, or who simply served their lord as part of family tradition, following in the footsteps of their father, uncles and grandfather. Collectively, this complex group of followers, amongst whom there was considerable overlap in terms of their personnel, duties and rewards, formed the inner core of their lord's affinity.¹¹ Alongside this inner core worked a host of 'well willers' whose relationship to the affinity in question was intermittent, short-term, and usually task specific. Such men included soldiers who drifted from one magnate military retinue to the next, and experienced administrators who acted as councillors or estates officials for multiple lords.

This sea of relationships was held together by various means on an individual basis, ranging from written contract to verbal agreement. The higher nobility possessed considerable wealth, but even their purses were not infinitely filled with coins, meaning that they had to manage their retaining policies carefully. In terms of the different types of ties they could forge with their followers, the most formal was the indenture of retainer, which bound a knight or esquire to his lord, usually for service in peace and war, with fees specified and expectations of the relationship outlined. Others were never indentured and simply served their lord in war and/or peace, received his fees, and possibly also were granted the use of his livery badge and *bouche de court*. An annuity was the most desirable outcome of such a

¹¹ The most obvious example of overlap within these three loosely defined groups is the fact that indentured retainers could also be household attendants. Ibid.

relationship, since it could guarantee its recipient a steady income for the rest of his days. It was generally a reward for past and future service and was for the most part only granted to followers who had long been members of their lord's affinity. The livery badge, although not commonly distributed by all lords, was the most symbolic and binding element in lord-retainer relations, with strong chivalric overtones, for the gentry might serve numerous lords in various capacities at the same time, but they could receive livery from only one lord. The wearing of their lord's livery advertised their allegiance to him and made their personal bond with him public knowledge.¹² In Norfolk virtually every leading member of county society was connected with more than one lord, reflecting the lack of factionalism in the shire, and reinforcing the fact that the county's resident and non-resident nobility well understood that they were in no position to extract indivisible obedience from their adherents. The lord-retainer relationship was essentially a package in which both sides hoped to benefit. For Norfolk's warrior gentry, their sword arms in wartime, and their wealth, prestige and governmental experience in peacetime, made them well worth employing.

The magnate affinity thus comprised a plethora of interlocking relationships of various types, some of which were more stable than others.¹³ It was a complex process that cannot be taken entirely at face value. For instance, although indentures in peace and war provide evidence that a relationship existed, they are not necessarily indicative of a strong tie between lord and retainer. The Norfolk esquire William Rees, for example, sealed an indenture with Richard, earl of Arundel, in 1387, yet from what we know of Rees' career he was much more strongly identified with Thomas Mowbray, earl of Nottingham, who was his feudal overlord at his home at Tharston.¹⁴ Consequently a written contract might in fact reflect the limitations of the bond between the two, for the lord might be seeking to shore up an unstable relationship by binding a wavering knight or esquire to him in writing. Likewise, where a knight or esquire had proven himself to be a trusted associate and loyal

¹² Simon Walker in particular stressed the importance of the livery badge as a source of cohesion within the Lancastrian affinity, although the SS badge of the house of Lancaster was something of a special case. Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 94-6.

¹³ See below.

¹⁴ TNA, C66/348 m. 29; *Early Lincoln Wills: An Abstract of all the Wills and Administrations Recorded in the Episcopal Registers of the Old Diocese of Lincoln*, ed. A. W. Gibbons (London, 1888), p. 62.

companion, there was little need to bind him by formal written contract, nor to prevent him from offering his services to other lords at the same time. At a less exalted level, this was the sort of informal trustworthy relationship that prevailed between the Morleys and Kerdistons.¹⁵

Turning from the complexities of retaining to the concerns of Norfolk's absentee magnates, it is clear that their interests in the county were extremely limited; a situation reflected in the policies they pursued in the region, which were dictated by their wider landed stake in other parts of the realm, by their private financial positions, and by the world of high politics and court life in which they daily participated. For each of them, their Norfolk estates comprised only a very small proportion of their overall landed wealth. Their power bases, which cannot always be clearly identified given the breadth of their landholdings, were to be found in other counties and it was in these places that they more actively participated in local politics.¹⁶ Moreover, most were preoccupied in the halls of government, so it was quite natural that their visits to isolated Norfolk were rare. John of Gaunt provides an exaggerated case in point. He had campaigns to conduct in France and Spain, a massive presence at court and in the royal council to maintain in the face of lordly jealousy and parliamentary complaint, and, at the local level, the difficult prospect of governing his politically unstable lands in Lancashire and Sussex.¹⁷ Much the same was true of Edward the Black Prince. He only acquired his principal Norfolk holding of Castle Rising upon the death of his grandmother, Isabella, in 1358, and subsequently spent the following decade across the Channel governing Aquitaine and warring in Castile, before returning home in ill health.¹⁸ Great lords like John of Gaunt and the Black Prince provided a paradoxical form of lordship for Norfolk's greater gentry. They rarely visited the shire and had little to no interest in its internal politics, yet at the same time, they were active military commanders who, if nothing

¹⁵ See Chapter Three.

¹⁶ For Norfolk's non-resident magnates, see Chapter Two.

¹⁷ *The Anonimale Chronicle 1333-1381: from a MS. written at St. Mary's Abbey, York*, ed. V. H. Galbraith (Manchester, 1970), pp. 80-92; Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 39-41, 117-81. For Gaunt's few visits to Norfolk see, NRO, (Norfolk Record Society) NRS 3342 m. 3; NRS 15171 m. 2d; TNA, DL 43/15/7 m. 4; *JGReg.* (1372-76), no. 1052; *Records of the City of Norwich*, ii, pp. 45, 48.

¹⁸ *BPrege*, iv, p. 261; R. Barber, *The Black Prince*, second edition (Stroud, 2003), pp. 170-237.

else, were quite prepared to employ Norfolk's knightly elite, knowing that men of local prestige would be able to appear at muster accompanied by a sizeable retinue of their own to bolster their lord's forces.

For the resident nobility, their impact upon Norfolk society was much more direct. Prior to their extinction, the Ufford earls of Suffolk had looked set to dominate East Anglia. Robert Ufford, the first earl, had consistently been raised to new heights through his personal friendship with Edward III, and the grants and gifts he received allowed him to rapidly expand his original patrimony in Suffolk.¹⁹ With royal favour came useful marriages and more land grants and wardships, by which means Robert's son, Earl William, had been able to acquire large chunks of the old inheritance of the thirteenth-century Bigod earls of Norfolk.²⁰ Earl William's sudden death in 1382, however, removed at a stroke the possibility of Ufford dominance,²¹ and one finds that between his passing and the usurpation of 1399, the loyalties of Norfolk's gentry were widely dispersed among the many nobles who held estates in the region. John of Gaunt's substantial military-based following aside, it was in these years that Thomas Mowbray, Richard, earl of Arundel, and Edmund, earl of March, all acquired their most important retainers from the county. During this time too, numerous Norfolk knights simultaneously found their way into Ricardian royal service.²²

While these great lords were playing out the Appellant crisis during the 1380s and 1390s, William Ufford's death had allowed his aunt, Margaret of Brotherton, countess of Norfolk, to unite virtually the entire Bigod inheritance in her own hands, and to centre her administration at Framlingham Castle.²³ Margaret's position as a woman naturally prevented her from utilising her pre-eminent position for political ends, and indeed her retaining policies were limited to the recruitment of intelligent

¹⁹ *Rot. Parl.*, ii, p. 57; *CFR*, 1327-37, p. 206; *CPR*, 1330-34, p. 69; *CPR*, 1334-38, p. 418.

²⁰ For the Uffords' rapidly increased landed wealth, see their Inquisitions Post Mortem for 1316, 1369 and 1389. *CIPM*, vi, no. 58; *Ibid.*, xii, no. 424; *Ibid.*, xv, nos. 599-626.

²¹ Virgoe, 'The Crown and Local Government', p. 225.

²² See below.

²³ R. E. Archer, 'The Mowbrays: Earls of Nottingham and Dukes of Norfolk to 1432' (D.Phil, Oxford, 1984), pp. 31, 152, 333; Archer, 'The Estates and Finances of Margaret of Brotherton', 264-80; Virgoe, 'The Crown and Local Government', pp. 29-30; *CP*, ix, pp. 599-600.

lawyers and professional bureaucrats, since she had no need for a military retinue composed of knights and esquires.²⁴ Margaret's achievements, though, might have paved the way for long-term Mowbray dominance in Norfolk, had not the family's political fortunes collapsed around the turn of the century. By the time the Mowbrays had suffered through the banishment of Earl Thomas in 1398, and the execution of his eponymous son in 1405, the opportunity for one noble family to hold on to the Bigod inheritance had effectively passed.²⁵ The eclipse of this inheritance, and its re-parcelling after the usurpation, were in many ways vital steps in enabling the subsequent power-sharing rule of Sir Thomas Erpingham and Thomas Beaufort under the auspices of Lancastrian royal service.²⁶

What these changing fortunes reveal in particular is that the balance of power between the nobility and gentry was different from family to family, and very much rested upon short-term circumstance. For instance, if a lord wished to undertake a military expedition he needed knightly captains in a hurry, so in a local context the balance of power temporarily rested with his military retainers and other gentry soldiers for hire.²⁷ On the other hand, since magnate service potentially offered a retainer a comfortable income and associated prestige, those gentry at the apex of county society were essentially indirectly competing with one another for places in magnate affinities. It was common knowledge that a noble lord could protect his followers in court, see that litigation went in their favour, and provide them with gifts and grants that improved their position in their native shire.²⁸ As such, a knight or esquire who remained aloof from magnate service, especially in a county like Norfolk where the nobility was not overtly factionalised, could risk being leap-frogged by men of lesser rank who had found their way into the good graces of greater lords, and keeping up socially with one's neighbours would have been one of the reasons why some gentry sought employment in the retinues of the nobility. The rise of individual gentry in magnate affinities, however, naturally relied upon the continuing prosperity of the dynasty they served. These ties must consequently be understood as an ongoing

²⁴ Archer, 'The Estates and Finances of Margaret of Brotherton', pp. 269, 276-7.

²⁵ See Chapter Two.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ For the military context involved in magnate affinities, see esp. Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 39-80.

²⁸ See Chapter Four, n. 9.

series of associations, which were of differing lengths and strengths, and in which the nature of the relationship inevitably altered with the winds of political, military, and dynastic change.²⁹

In this light, it is unsurprising that Norfolk's magnates adopted a readymade policy of quality over quantity in the choice of their first-rank retainers. An important step along that road was to bring into their following, usually informally, the county's resident barons - the Morleys, Bardolfs and Scales - as well as the shire's more prosperous knightly families - like the Kerdistons, Hastings, Playses, and Feltons. These men could essentially act as a kind of bridge between the higher nobility and the rest of the local greater gentry. As we saw in the case of the Morleys' long-term association with the Uffords, and which was equally true of the Kerdistons' and Feltons' extensive service to the Black Prince,³⁰ such families were useful to the region's magnates because they possessed the contacts and local authority necessary to bring other, marginally less prominent, gentry into the affinities of these great lords.³¹

Along the same lines, the nobility utilised the independence of Norfolk's gentry by attracting numerous 'well-willers' to their cause.³² The latter essentially acted as free agents, as go-betweens between magnates. They invariably possessed a voice in county politics, as well as professional skills in war, law and administration that could be of use to a lord whose personal presence in the county was limited and whose interest in its affairs was at best intermittent. Most of Norfolk's knightly elite were 'well willers' to multiple great lords during their careers and only a few were heavily aligned with a single affinity.³³ Arundel, March and Mowbray never formally drew more than a few Norfolk men into their following, the Uffords were more intent upon recruiting amongst Suffolk's elite than Norfolk's, and only Edward the Black Prince, John of Gaunt, and later, in rather indirect fashion, Thomas Beaufort, developed meaningful followings amongst the county's greater gentry.³⁴ Yet even

²⁹ For examples, see below.

³⁰ See below.

³¹ See Chapter Three.

³² See below.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid. For the military context, see Chapter Five.

these recruits were in the main not selected with a political agenda in mind, and as such, from the perspective of Norfolk's gentry, one cannot baldly label individuals as being members of one affinity or another.

Additionally, the majority of Norfolk's resident and non-resident nobility were relatively passive in terms of their efforts to influence politics in the shire.³⁵ Occasionally one lord or other might wish to see a loyal retainer returned to parliament or added to the commissions of the peace,³⁶ or a great lord might in some specific matter seek to pervert the course of justice for his own ends,³⁷ but on the whole the nobility had no real need to influence Norfolk's political structure, since most of the county's regular office holders were anyway directly or indirectly connected with numerous magnates. The greater gentry were not acolytes of their lord when they sat in local office. On the contrary, as touched upon in the previous chapter, their election suggests that they were regarded as suitable candidates by their fellow gentry, and also by the royal administration, without whose ratification they could not assume their posts. Moreover, the nobility were not the only ones with a potentially vested interest in shire elections. Prominent gentry, especially those seeking to make a career in administration, might have canvassed long and hard for

³⁵ A considerable body of scholarship has concerned itself with magnate influence over shire politics. For analyses of the East Anglian situation, see Virgoe, 'The Crown and Local Government', pp. 218-41; Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 195-9; Gorski, *The Fourteenth-Century Sheriff*, pp. 21-31.

³⁶ John of Gaunt took this step several times in Norfolk. For example, Godfrey Foljaumbe and Edmund Clippesby were both added to the commission of 6 May 1371 at Gaunt's request. *CPR*, 1369-74, p. 103. Both men were subsequently named to the commission of July 20. *Ibid.*, p. 305. Thomas Hungerford was added to the commission of 5 May 1377. *CPR*, 1374-7, p. 487. John Methewold was belatedly added to his first commission on 3 March 1386. *CPR*, 1385-9, p. 82.

³⁷ E.g. When Edward the Black Prince procured a commission of oyer and terminer in 1358, those who sat - Robert Thorpe, John Wingfield, John Knyvet, John Berney, Henry Green and Thomas St Omer - were all East Anglian gentry with connections to his affinity. *CPR*, 1358-61, p. 159. This was a common means of acquiring a favourable verdict and was employed by other magnates in the region, notably John of Gaunt, who on occasion even ordered his estates officials to make payments to the justices involved. NRO, (Norfolk Record Society) NRS 3342 m. 2d. For a general analysis of commissions of oyer and terminer, see Kaeuper, 'Law and Order in Fourteenth-Century England', 734-84.

popular support, or they might have had themselves raised into high county office through dubious practices.³⁸

From this situation two key factors about magnate-gentry relations in the county emerge. Firstly, Norfolk's gentry were largely independent of direct magnate influence in their political lives. Secondly, because the lord-retainer bond could be informal, as well as formal, and because many of the gentry served multiple lords simultaneously in a relatively peaceful political climate, this meant that the vertical ties of service in Norfolk essentially represented an additional fillip to the horizontal social networks that broadly united the county's greater gentry. In this context, since magnate service was essentially a source of networking, social prestige, and the search for possible pecuniary advantage, and since most of the higher nobility offered service in war as well as peace, they naturally became the most substantial employers of Norfolk's warrior gentry. In this capacity, they indirectly played a significant role in shaping the character of Norfolk's military community, and thus the remainder of this chapter will examine the form of this relationship, as well as the interplay between military and civilian employment concerns in magnate affinities.

Patronage and Reward in Peace and War

For many of Norfolk's greater gentry, their career prospects were considerably enhanced by their membership of a magnate affinity, and indeed, beyond the fees they received, the acquisition of a sponsor or patron provided them with a powerful connection that made them men not to be trifled with.³⁹ Their prosperity, however, did not solely rest upon the services they performed for their lord. Most Norfolk knights, esquires and administrators who made their careers in magnate service hailed from families who were anyway of some substance in the county and essentially possessed independent means. It was their very status in the locality that made their service attractive to the nobility. Their standing in the community enabled them to

³⁸ Very occasionally, sheriffs would return themselves as members of parliament. For example, Sir Hugh Fastolf, who had represented London twice and his native Yarmouth five times as M.P., was serving as sheriff of Norfolk in 1390 when he returned himself as an M.P. for the following session, although he was no longer sheriff by the time parliament actually met. *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, pp. 58-9.

³⁹ Direct profit from the spoils of war, together with a more detailed examination of the contacts accrued on campaign, will be discussed in Chapter Five.

more effectively carry out their lord's wishes, while their employment reflected well upon their lord by displaying to the wider gentry populace that he was capable of attracting important people into his service.

Membership of a magnate affinity for some of Norfolk's county elite proved a life-long commitment. Sir Thomas Felton gave a quarter of a century's service to Edward the Black Prince and Richard II.⁴⁰ The same was true of Sir Stephen Hales, who first served the Prince in war in 1353 and later became one of Richard's 'king's knights'.⁴¹ John Lancaster entered the service of the Mowbrays in 1389 and served their household until his death thirty-five years later.⁴² John Curson jr, Sir William Oldhall, and Sir Thomas Erpingham's nephew, Sir William Phelip, were all connected with Thomas Beaufort during the reigns of the first two Henrys.⁴³ Finally, of course, Erpingham and his friends, Sir Robert Berney, Sir John White, John Reymes and Oliver Groos, first joined the Lancastrian affinity under John of Gaunt in the 1380s and remained active in its service long after the usurpation of 1399.⁴⁴

Ricardian and Lancastrian retainers, in this sense, were something of a special case, since all subjects owed allegiance to their sovereign and it was therefore natural that those men fortunate enough to be in the affinity of a future king should have sought his favour once he had ascended the throne. Nonetheless, it is apparent that genuine trust and loyalty could develop between lord and retainer. Erpingham's attachment to Henry of Bolingbroke has already been described, but there exist other examples. Sir Thomas Felton rapidly became a close companion of the Black Prince, fighting by his side, sitting on his council, holding administrative posts on the Prince's behalf in the northwest, following him to Aquitaine in the 1360s, and spending the 1370s as seneschal of the duchy, defending it manfully against the French *revaunche*. The fact that Felton remained in troubled Aquitaine, doing his best with limited support and with the French army closing in, underscores his loyalty to the Edwardian regime and especially to the Prince, beneath whose banner he had

⁴⁰ *BPrege*, iv, p. 207; *Anonimale Chronicle*, ed. Galbraith, p. 116.

⁴¹ *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, i, p. 163; H. J. Hewitt, *The Black Prince's Expedition 1355-1357* (Manchester, 1958), p. 204; Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, p. 285.

⁴² *CPR, 1399-1401*, p. 294; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, pp. 548-51.

⁴³ Worcestre, *Itineraries*, pp. 354-9.

⁴⁴ See Chapter Three.

helped conquer much of what he was now defending.⁴⁵ Sir Simon Felbrigg, in similar vein, was quite clearly a favourite of Richard II's, for he attained a prominent position in the royal household, becoming a 'king's knight' and the royal standard bearer.⁴⁶ Similarly, when Sir John Fastolf was charged with cowardice after the battle of Patay in 1429, John, duke of Bedford, accepted the temporary removal of Fastolf's Garter stall, but made sure the veteran of Verneuil and Maine was given every opportunity to prove his innocence.⁴⁷ Indeed a few years later Bedford named Fastolf as one of the executors of his will.⁴⁸ Although Bedford was of more exalted rank, the two men had essentially become colleagues, jointly prosecuting the English war effort during the minority of Henry VI. More generally, the children of the gentry could become attached to noble households, where they would have shared tuition and chivalric training alongside the children of their host.⁴⁹ Finally, long-time affiliations could run deep and men sometimes received personal tokens of appreciation from their lords. Sir John Brewes and Sir Ralph Hemenhale were each left bequests by Robert Ufford, earl of Suffolk, in his will.⁵⁰ Likewise, the Norwiches and Kerdistons, cousins of the Uffords, were bequeathed unspecified lands according to the will of Robert's son, Earl William.⁵¹ So too, Thomas Beaufort left possessions to several of his closest associates, including Sir William Phelip and Sir Robert Carbonell, who received respectively a cup and doublets faced with velvet.⁵²

Magnates' tenants were also in a prime position to enter their feudal overlord's affinity. Such men would have been on hand to keep an eye on their lord's estates, or

⁴⁵ Morgan, 'Sir Thomas Felton', *ODNB*, ix, pp. 286-7.

⁴⁶ Milner, 'Sir Simon Felbrigg KG', 85-6.

⁴⁷ Jean de Waurin, *Recueil des Croniques et Anchiennes Istories de la Grant Bretagne*, ed. W. Hardy, (London, R.S., 1879), iii, p. 306. See also, H. E. L. Collins, 'Sir John Fastolf, John Lord Talbot and the Dispute over Patay: Ambition and Chivalry in the Fifteenth Century', *War and Society in Medieval and Early Modern Britain* (Liverpool, 2000), pp. 114-40.

⁴⁸ *Testamenta Vetusta*, i, pp. 241-2.

⁴⁹ See Chapters Six and Seven.

⁵⁰ *Testamenta Vetusta*., i, pp. 73-4; Hemenhale was probably the Uffords' closest connection in the region. His family held land from them, and he himself had served Earl Robert on five military campaigns, later acting as an attorney and receiver for Thomas and William Ufford. *CIPM*, xv, p. 251; *CPR*, 1361-64, p. 472; *CPR*, 1367-70, p. 10.

⁵¹ *Testamenta Vetusta*., i, pp. 114-15.

⁵² *Reg. Chichele*, ii, p. 362; *Testamenta Vetusta*, i, pp. 210-11.

to flesh out his military retinue. By fulfilling these duties a tenant could conceivably win his lord's favour, while deliberate avoidance of service might jeopardise their relationship. This was especially true of the greater gentry, who were the nobility's most important and influential tenants. Hence, Sir John Strange of Hunstanton, whose wardship Edward the Black Prince had unsuccessfully claimed by right of tenure, later fought for the Prince in Guienne.⁵³ Similarly, William Rees' family had long been feudal tenants of the Mowbrays and this very likely paved the way for Rees' rise in Mowbray's affinity.⁵⁴ In the same vein, William Ufford, earl of Suffolk, included amongst his executors Sir John White, who, although a committed Lancastrian, possessed estates around Norfolk's southern border, not far from Suffolk's own substantial holdings centred at Bungay and Framlingham.⁵⁵

Even if the bond of lordship was merely indirect, a great lord still wielded considerable influence over those who lived in the vicinity of his estates, and prominent gentry in this situation would have been well placed to find their way into favour. Sir Thomas Erpingham, Sir Robert Berney and Sir Simon Felbrigg, as we have seen, neighbours from northeast Norfolk in the heartland of Lancastrian territory, joined John of Gaunt's military retinue for service in Spain.⁵⁶ A certain John Suffolk, probably a bastard son of Earl Robert, regularly served under the latter's banner on campaign.⁵⁷ Along the same lines, one encounters a group of gentry with interests around Castle Rising in the county's northwest, who all held positions in the Black Prince's affinity at one time or another. These included Sir Thomas Felton, Sir William Elmham, Sir William Kerdiston II and Sir Richard Walkefare, each of whom fought alongside the Prince in his major battlefield triumphs.⁵⁸ Finally, from the testimony in the *Grey v. Hastings* Court of Chivalry dispute, it is clear that Sir Hugh Hastings III had been a frequent visitor at Framlingham Castle, as guest of his great kinswoman, Margaret of Brotherton, countess of Norfolk. It appeared that both Margaret and Anne, dowager countess of Pembroke, had a soft spot for Sir Hugh, and it is significant that, after the death in 1389 of Anne's son, the last Hastings earl of

⁵³ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 500.

⁵⁴ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, v, p. 305.

⁵⁵ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 829.

⁵⁶ *PCM*, i, pp. 439-42, 474-6, 443-4.

⁵⁷ TNA, C47/6/1, no. 13.

⁵⁸ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, x, pp. 289, 305, 336-7.

Pembroke, only in Norfolk did the juries find that the Pembroke estates belonged to the Hastings, while virtually everywhere else Lord Grey was declared the rightful heir.⁵⁹

Despite the importance of feudal and kinship ties, living near a lord's estates was naturally no guarantee of a placement in his affinity. After all, such was the structure of landed society in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England that any knight or esquire would have found himself living on or near estates held nominally by a noble overlord.⁶⁰ Consequently, those Norfolk gentry who achieved positions in lordly affinities were clearly individuals who had something to offer, either administratively or militarily, and often both. Networking was crucial to their cause, and here the overlap between horizontal and vertical social relations becomes most apparent. Sir Stephen Hales in his youth established a close friendship with Sir Thomas Felton, whose manors of Great and Little Ryburgh bordered Hales' own at Testerton.⁶¹ This connection gained Hales entrée into the Black Prince's military retinue and his success on the battlefield was what ultimately transformed his career and enabled him to become active in Norfolk politics following his retirement.⁶² Similarly, as we saw in the previous chapter, kinship ties associated Sir John Strange with both the Black Prince's and the Lancastrian affinity.⁶³

For those gentry who were strongly linked to one particular lord, the crises that intermittently afflicted magnate affinities could leave them in dire straits. Occasionally such shifts resulted from the winds of political change. During the late 1390s, it was not a good time to be too closely associated with the Appellants, Bolingbroke, Mowbray and Arundel. After the usurpation, by contrast, adherents of Richard II found their careers curtailed.⁶⁴ These, though, were extreme circumstances. The most regular travail to afflict magnate households and consequently to undermine

⁵⁹ Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*, pp. 56-7; *CIPM*, xvi, no. 897.

⁶⁰ M. Bailey, *The English Manor c. 1200-c. 1500* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 1-8. For numerous Norfolk examples of these complexities, see Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, *passim*.

⁶¹ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, x, p. 13; *CPR*, 1381-5, pp. 335, 557.

⁶² For Hales' career, see Chapter Five.

⁶³ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 500; Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, p. 13; *JGReg* (1379-1383), i, p. 8.

⁶⁴ Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility*, pp. 187-213.

their power-base was the death of the family's head. If the lord in question died without male issue, this could prove a tremendous boon to other magnate affinities. John of Gaunt, for example, in his youth acquired several old retainers of his father-in-law, Henry of Grosmont, while the death of the last Bohun earl of Hereford enabled Gaunt to receive the wartime services of Sir Thomas Morieux and Robert Fitzrauf, who would become two of his most active East Anglian military followers.⁶⁵ Even if a recently deceased lord did leave an heir, there was no guarantee that the latter would possess his predecessor's qualities.⁶⁶ Beyond this potentiality, an even worse fate, the minority crisis, might well endanger the standing of even the most powerful of magnate families. The untimely death of his lord, therefore, essentially left a gentry retainer with two options: he could either attempt to shift his primary allegiance to a different lord, or he could remain loyal to his longstanding employer's family and see them through the tough times. Should he decide upon the latter course, it was wise to have other contacts beyond his lord's affinity, but since magnate-gentry relations in Norfolk were not, on the whole, highly politicised in this era, most gentry, as we saw in the previous chapter, would anyway have maintained widespread connections of this sort through their friends, kin and neighbours.

A prime example of these complexities is to be found in the relationship between John of Gaunt and Sir Hugh Hastings II of Elsing. Hastings had long served Henry of Grosmont, fighting for him in various military campaigns during the 1350s, as his father had done before him.⁶⁷ When Grosmont died and Gaunt took over the Lancastrian affinity, Hastings became one of only two Norfolk knights to early make an indenture with Gaunt.⁶⁸ Gaunt may have been intent upon legally binding Hastings to his interests before the latter received a better offer. Hastings, as earlier touched upon, was a warrior of significant martial prestige and was cousin to the earls of

⁶⁵ CPR, 1370-4, p. 283; Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, p. 104.

⁶⁶ The abilities of individual family members proved pivotal to the rise and decline of the Courtenays and Beauchamps. Cherry, 'The Courtenay Earls of Devon', 71-99; Carpenter, 'The Beauchamp Affinity', 514-32.

⁶⁷ E.g. TNA, C76/38, m. 16. The Hastings were relatively new to East Anglia, hailing originally from northern England. They may have been more closely associated with the latter area at the time when they first became associated with Henry of Grosmont. For the Hastings' origins, see Chapter One.

⁶⁸ Hastings' indenture with Gaunt, contracted in 1366, is printed in Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 294-5.

Pembroke. He was also a banneret and would consequently have been expected to attend his lord at muster accompanied by a sizeable military retinue of his own.⁶⁹ By dint of these virtues he would have maintained widespread contacts with members of the higher nobility, as indeed his father is known to have done.⁷⁰ From Gaunt's perspective, with no prior influence in Norfolk, he needed to demonstrate that a powerful and respected Norfolk knight was prepared to enter his employ. As such, Hastings' presence in Gaunt's retinue would have been worth its expense for it would have made Gaunt appear more attractive as a potential 'good lord' to other knights and esquires from the county.

Occurring in an era known for its machinations and intrigues, this explanation of the Gaunt-Hastings relationship seems quite logical. Yet a third, much more straightforward possibility must also be considered and perhaps comes closest to the heart of the matter. Hastings had already been in Grosmont's affinity and Grosmont had been by popular acclaim a very 'good lord' indeed.⁷¹ If Hastings had been contented in Grosmont's service, which seems likely, then there would have been little cause for him to go seeking a new lord immediately. Gaunt was a royal prince and Hastings was a leading knight in the affinity Gaunt has recently inherited. Their relationship in this sense was essentially a feudal one and it would probably have been a surprise to all concerned had Hastings not remained a member of the Lancastrian affinity at least initially. In this instance, Hastings' ties of service appear intimately enmeshed with feudal bonds and, potentially also, with a sense of chivalrous loyalty to the affinity under whose banner he and his father had so regularly fought and prospered.

In like fashion, a few of Norfolk's greater gentry aligned themselves strongly with a single affinity - their fortunes ebbing and flowing alongside their lord's. Sir Thomas Erpingham was naturally the most exceptional, though by no means the only, Norfolk man to profit in this regard.⁷² Sir Thomas Gerbergh, having started his career as a

⁶⁹ Hastings, like most of Gaunt's retainers of comital rank, was expected according to his indenture to provide twenty men-at-arms and twenty archers. Ibid. For Gaunt's general policy towards his bannerets, see Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, p. 49.

⁷⁰ For the Hastings' connections with the higher nobility, see Chapter Three.

⁷¹ For Grosmont's career, see Fowler, *Henry of Grosmont*.

⁷² See Chapters Two and Three.

soldier serving under Thomas Lord Morley,⁷³ was formally retained in 1388 by Edmund of Langley, duke of York. Gerbergh was retained for life to serve as York's steward, receiving as his fee 40 marks p.a. from the issues of Somerford Keynes (Wilts.). He was additionally granted 4s. per day, and *bouche de court*, when on York's business, and agreed to go overseas in the duke's retinue if required. As a measure of his loyalty and the trust in which he was held, Gerbergh later acted as an executor of York's will, although some time before the duke's death in 1402, he appears to have accepted an annuity of £20 and retired from active administration.⁷⁴ More impressively still, John Lancaster and William Rees remained committed to the welfare of the house of Mowbray throughout the turbulent decades either side of the usurpation. Lancaster became the chief councillor of the earl's underage son, Thomas, and following the latter's beheading in the wake of the Scrope Rebellion in 1405, he continued to act as feoffee, executor and councillor to the family's new child-heir, John.⁷⁵ Likewise Rees served Earl Thomas and both of his sons, holding estates for the latter during their minorities, although he did not live to see the Mowbrays' revival under Henry V.⁷⁶

The above pattern, however, was the exception rather than the rule. Few of Norfolk's elite made their names wholly in the service of a single noble household. It was their professional talents that provided them with their avenue towards social advancement and they were consequently able to enter the employ of numerous magnates during their careers. As men of local importance in their own right, to base their career prospects around the continued survival of one noble family would have represented a most unappetizing proposition. The point has already been made that those greater gentry who rose in magnate service did so, in part at least, because they were personally well off and well connected with their fellow knights and esquires. The widespread friendships and associations of a retainer granted his primary lord networks that could be exploited at a future date, as is clear from those instances

⁷³ TNA, C47/6/1, no. 40.

⁷⁴ TNA, C66/373 m. 25; *Testamenta Vetusta*, i, pp. 150-1; Gerbergh had his annuity from York confirmed by Henry IV after the arrest of the current duke, Edward, for his involvement in the uprising of 1405. *CPR, 1405-8*, p. 12.

⁷⁵ *CFR, 1399-1405*, pp. 162, 208-9, 212-13; *CPR, 1401-5*, p. 326; *CPR, 1405-8*, p. 86; BL, Add. Ch. 16556.

⁷⁶ *CFR, 1399-1405*, pp. 153, 321; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, pp. 187-9.

where retainers drew particular friends or neighbours into their lord's affinity.⁷⁷ Unless two magnates were in flagrant dispute, as say were William, fourth de la Pole earl of Suffolk, and John, third Mowbray duke of Norfolk, during the 1440s,⁷⁸ there was little reason for a magnate to discourage his retainers from networking amongst those other nobles in the region and this is evidently something that Norfolk's elite, both soldiers and civilians, did in earnest.

The county's leading lawyers, in particular, granted their services liberally to the nobility, and Norfolk's bureaucrats in general prospered in magnate service.⁷⁹ The opportunities available to talented administrators were widespread, enabling numerous gentry to act as councillors and attorneys not only for their fellow gentry, but for the higher nobility as well.⁸⁰ While a number of Norfolk's civilian gentry profited in this fashion, the warrior gentry too were able to make administration an integral aspect of their careers, balancing out these duties with their intermittent participation in their lord's military retinue. Indeed, as will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Five, it was often the case that a knight or esquire who had campaigned actively in his youth would gradually segue into administration at the level of the county or within his lord's affinity.

Several examples illustrate the usefulness of long-serving soldiers in the world of administration. Sir John Radcliffe, with his wealth of military experience, was appointed deputy lieutenant of Calais during the crisis of 1436 and successfully led its

⁷⁷ Several examples have already been cited. E.g. Sir Thomas Felton and Sir Stephen Hales with Edward the Black Prince; Sir Thomas Erpingham, Sir Robert Berney and Sir Simon Felbrigg with John of Gaunt. See above. See also Chapter Three.

⁷⁸ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 82-119.

⁷⁹ For careerism through the law, see Harding, *A Social History of English Law*, pp. 167-93; Ives, 'The Common Lawyers in Pre-Reformation England', 145-73.

⁸⁰ E.g. Thomas Derham, a lawyer from Crimbleham near Bishop's Lynn, acquired Sir Leonard Kerdiston as his most important early client, and later acted as a legal advisor for Sir Simon Felbrigg, for numerous members of the Erpingham circle, and for the burgesses of Bishop's Lynn and Norwich. He was closely associated with Thomas Beaufort, the principal lord near Derham's home in west Norfolk, and also with the latter's brother, Cardinal Henry Beaufort. Derham was additionally retained as a steward and legal advisor by Michael de la Pole, second earl of Suffolk, and by the duchy of Lancaster. *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, pp. 777-9.

defence to popular acclaim.⁸¹ Back in England, almost a century earlier, the lowly esquire, William Thweyt, whose military career would last over five decades, became deputy constable of Corfe Castle in Dorset; a duty carrying significant responsibilities, for the actual constable was rarely present, with the result that Thweyt was effectively in charge of the castle the majority of the time.⁸² As Thweyt's case highlights, high-ranking officials were invariably preoccupied with other matters, so the gentry could make fine careers for themselves acting as their deputies. It was in this vein that Sir Thomas Erpingham appointed his friend and fellow Lancastrian, Sir Robert Berney, to be his deputy as warden of the Cinque Ports. Erpingham in the aftermath of the usurpation found himself with a plethora of offices to his name and would naturally have lacked the time to regularly attend to his duties as warden, while Berney - as an experienced soldier in his own right - could have protected this key strategic position should the need have arisen.⁸³

Beyond manning castles and garrisons, the fact that esteemed knights with long war records indisputably understood the business of warfare and the theoretical and practical aspects of chivalry meant that they were also perfectly suited to act as deputies before the Constable's Court (the Court of Chivalry) and the Court of the Admiralty. Sir Nicholas Dagworth, near the end of his long life, was appointed by Richard II to determine an appeal against a judgement in the former court, while Sir Simon Felbrigg, Sir John Strange and Oliver Groos performed the same function in the latter, and Sir John Curson determined appeals in both courts.⁸⁴ Curson's military career is difficult to reconstruct, but his appointment suggests he was a soldier. Dagworth, Felbrigg, Strange and Groos were all men of long military experience.⁸⁵ In other ways too, the ceremonial side of genteel society likewise required a working knowledge of chivalry. So, for instance, Sir Simon Felbrigg's prior military

⁸¹ D. Grummitt, *The Calais Garrison: War and Military Service in England, 1436-1558* (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 26, 28, 34.

⁸² A. Ayton, 'William de Thweyt, Esquire: Deputy Constable of Corfe Castle in the 1340s', *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries*, xxxii (1989), 731-8. For a general consideration of the role of local officials in keeping the peace at the county level, see A. Musson, 'Sub-Keepers and Constables: The Role of Local Officials in Keeping the Peace in Fourteenth-Century England', *EHR*, cxvii (2002), 1-24.

⁸³ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, p. 208.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, ii, p. 733; iii, p. 250; iv, p. 500; *CPR, 1391-6*, p. 227.

⁸⁵ See Chapter Five.

experience under John of Gaunt made him a safe choice as Richard II's standard-bearer, for he would have been well aware how to conduct himself appropriately both on and off the battlefield.⁸⁶

Given their wide-ranging abilities, therefore, it is thoroughly understandable that simultaneous employment in the service of a variety of magnates was quite common amongst the county elite. Knights and esquires sometimes served in several military retinues during their careers, while skilled administrators were asked to act in their professional capacity by numerous lords, even when they were known to be firmly associated with one affinity in particular. William Rees, as we saw earlier, despite his connections with the Mowbrays, was also retained by Richard, earl of Arundel, and later acted as an attorney for Thomas Lord Morley.⁸⁷ The earl of Arundel too acquired as a trustee Sir Robert Berney, whose primary allegiance was to the house of Lancaster.⁸⁸ John Lancaster, the Mowbrays' other principal retainer in the region, additionally undertook the duties of executor and feoffee for Isabella Ufford, dowager countess of Suffolk, Thomas Lord Morley, and Robert Lord Willoughby.⁸⁹ Another party to Lancaster's transaction with Isabella Ufford was Edmund Oldhall, the Lancastrian receiver, who also acted for the Lords Morley and Alexander Trottington, bishop of Norwich.⁹⁰ Sir George Felbrigg and his kinsman, Sir Simon,⁹¹ were both closely connected with the earls of March (the former acquiring an annuity of £20 in 1397), whilst simultaneously being prominent figures in the Ricardian royal household. Sir George was at the same time associated with Thomas of Woodstock,

⁸⁶ *PCM*, i, pp. 443-4; *CPR*, 1391-6, pp. 473, 476, 563, 601; *CCR*, 1392-6, p. 454.

⁸⁷ *Early Lincoln Wills*, ed. Gibbons, p. 62; TNA, C66/348 m. 29; *CPR*, 1391-6, p. 506; *CPR*, 1396-9, p. 255; *CPR*, 1399-1401, p. 526; *CPR*, 1422-9, pp. 391, 394.

⁸⁸ *CCR*, 1396-9, pp. 72, 84, 399.

⁸⁹ *Reg. Chichele*, ii, pp. 95-6, 113, 144; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, ii, p. 470; *CCR*, 1419-22, p. 198.

⁹⁰ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, pp. 871-2.

⁹¹ The relationship between Sir George and Sir Simon Felbrigg is open to doubt. Blomefield suggested that Sir Simon's father was Sir Roger Felbrigg, and Milner followed this line. This would imply that Sir George was either an older brother of Sir Simon, or that there were two George Felbriggs, perhaps one Sir Simon's uncle, the other his older brother. By contrast Christopher Given-Wilson states quite categorically in his study of the English royal household that Sir George Felbrigg was Sir Simon's father. Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, viii, p. 109; Milner, 'Sir Simon Felbrigg KG', 84, Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, p. 202.

duke of Gloucester, and acted as an attorney for Thomas Mowbray prior to his exile.⁹² Sir John Curson was connected with both the Lords Morley and Sir William Bardolf (kinsman of the Lords Bardolf of Wormegay), while his son served in Sir Thomas Erpingham's military retinue, and also became associated with Thomas Beaufort.⁹³ Oliver Groos, another long-time Lancastrian, fought in the military retinue of Michael, the second de la Pole earl of Suffolk, was later connected with the latter's infamous son, William, the fourth earl, and also performed administrative tasks for Walter, fifth Lord Fitzwalter, and Joan, Lady Beauchamp of Abergavenny.⁹⁴ Finally, Edmund Winter, brother of John Winter of Erpingham fame, acquired natural ties to the Lancastrian affinity, yet served as a legal councillor, attorney and feoffee for John, second Mowbray duke of Norfolk, as well as Thomas, duke of Clarence, and Thomas Lord Morley.⁹⁵

Norfolk's elite was thus extremely well connected with the East Anglian nobility, both magnates and barons, and beyond the indirect benefit of power by association, there were a host of more tangible rewards that flowed their way. John of Gaunt allowed some of his leading followers to farm the income from manors within his considerable appanage in north Norfolk.⁹⁶ Sir Thomas Erpingham, long before he attained national prominence, received payments from the hundred of South Erpingham.⁹⁷ Likewise, Sir Thomas Morieux was paid from the manor of Fakenham,⁹⁸ and Sir John Plays from the hundreds of Gallow and Brothecross.⁹⁹ Other gentry were rewarded in the same way. For instance, Thomas Mowbray paid Sir John Ingoldesthorpe his fee by charging it upon the Mowbray manor of Willington

⁹² G. A. Holmes, *The Estates of the Higher Nobility in Fourteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1957), p. 63; BL, Egerton Roll 8738; *CPR*, 1396-9, pp. 422-3; Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, p. 283; *CPR*, 1388-92, p. 188; Goodman, *The Loyal Conspiracy*, p. 102.

⁹³ *CIPM*, xiii, no. 328; *CPR*, 1370-4, p. 419; *CCR*, 1396-9, pp. 93, 504; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1883), Appendix, p. 568; Worcestre, *Itineraries*, pp. 354-9.

⁹⁴ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, pp. 250-2.

⁹⁵ *CPR*, 1416-22, pp. 53, 265; *CPR*, 1452-61, p. 238; *CCR*, 1422-9, p. 394; *Reg. Chichele*, ii, pp. 474, 476; Archer, 'The Mowbrays', p. 209.

⁹⁶ Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 81-94.

⁹⁷ TNA, DL42/16 f. 16.

⁹⁸ *JGReg* (1379-1383), ii, pp. 312-13.

⁹⁹ *CPR*, 1367-1370, p. 406.

(Beds.).¹⁰⁰ Offices could prove equally useful as methods of payment, since, as a paying job, they provided the holder with a steady income. Since administration had a tendency to lead to litigation, these were duties often given to Norfolk's pool of career administrators. John Berney, Reginald Eccles, Edmund Gournay and William Paston were respectively the stewards of the Norfolk estates of Edward the Black Prince, Robert Ufford, earl of Suffolk, John of Gaunt, and John Mowbray, duke of Norfolk.¹⁰¹ Able knights and esquires too performed these duties. Sir Robert Berney became steward of the Lancastrian estate of Gimmingham in 1398-9.¹⁰² John Lancaster became chancellor of Berwick at an annual fee of £40 and later keeper of Marck Castle at Calais.¹⁰³ Beyond the prestige of such offices, and the wages that accompanied them, such dutiful service often garnered further rewards. Lancaster, for example, received life tenancy of Diseworth manor in Leicestershire, which was worth as much as £36 p.a.,¹⁰⁴ while Berney received a life annuity of £20 around 1399, which was later doubled by Henry V.¹⁰⁵

The fees received by these Norfolk retainers quite clearly varied depending upon their value to their lord and upon the size of their lord's purse. Their administrative abilities and, for some, their standing within their chosen vocation, were important elements too, but in general terms it was obviously the case that the greater their local renown, the higher the price a lord would have been prepared to pay for their services. Moreover, the status they acquired, and concomitantly the rewards they accrued, were not granted overnight. An annuity or pension had to be earned, and in this fashion, many of Norfolk's most successful soldiers, lawyers and administrators, who had become heavily associated with particular noble households, eventually received just reward for their dutiful performance of the services required of them.

Sponsorship through magnate service was thus a vital prop for the budding careerist and for Norfolk's greater gentry in general. Such service, however, did not

¹⁰⁰ *CPR, 1399-1401*, p. 193.

¹⁰¹ *BPR*, iv, pp. 263, 352; NRO, (Norfolk Record Society) NRS 3342 m. 1; H. Castor, *Blood & Roses: The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 2004), p. 13.

¹⁰² TNA, DL29/289/4744 m. 4.

¹⁰³ TNA, E101/41/17; C76/76 m. 12; C76/77 m. 11.

¹⁰⁴ *CPR, 1396-9*, p. 422.

¹⁰⁵ *House of Commons*, ii, p. 209; TNA, DL42/17, f. 26.

simply represent an easy means of getting ahead for those lucky few who rose high in the estimation of powerful lords. While many of Norfolk's elite willingly entered magnate service and evidently benefited from lordly patronage, one cannot forget that obligations - feudal, tenurial, or simply those of family tradition - also played their part in drawing men into noble employ. Not everyone would have profited as spectacularly as those whose careers have been outlined above, and, to reiterate the point, magnate service always contained an element of risk, while lord and follower each hoped to prosper from their relationship.

Norfolk's warrior gentry nonetheless in many instances enhanced their standing in their county community through a combination of military and administrative service in magnate affinities. Removing civilian duties from the equation entirely, however, the higher nobility were, in a purely military context, the largest-scale recruiters of soldiers in the realm. Since one of their prime purposes in East Anglia was to bring greater gentry into their service as war captains, it is clear that in certain ways their recruiting policies, and the extent of their personal military participation, would have impacted directly upon Norfolk's own military community - especially amongst those knights and wealthy esquires who formed its upper echelons and were in most direct contact with their noble commanders. The social and chivalric connections between the warrior nobility and Norfolk's gentry military community are the subject of the remainder of this chapter.

Magnate Affinities and Regional Military Society

Indirectly, consistent military service in the same magnate retinue played a vital role in engendering a measure of *esprit de corps* amongst Norfolk's warrior elite. Self-evident though it is, the more regularly a great lord campaigned, the more regularly did his retainers. The higher nobility, especially during the reigns of Edward III and Henry V, vigorously prosecuted the war with France, with the result that most noble families remained heavily involved on overseas ventures during this epoch. They attended the king accompanied by their own followers, and, like their sovereign, the core of their company was made up of their household knights and esquires, as well as those retained by indenture in peace and war. One of the principal incentives for the nobility to recruit the regional knightly elite into their affinities was simply that, when military expeditions were in the offing, these men were of sufficient status

in their local county community that they could appear at muster accompanied by a small force of their own, thereby bolstering the size of their lord's following and making it easier for him to achieve the quotas for his retinue.¹⁰⁶

Norfolk's greater gentry had every opportunity to serve extensively overseas, since the landed nobility of the county were among the most active soldiers of the age. Edward the Black Prince, by dint of martial reputation alone, naturally acquired a strong military following in the region.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, John of Gaunt, after initial military experience under his older brother in Spain and France, became England's most active war leader of the 1370s and 1380s, commanding *chevauchées* across the Channel in 1369, 1372 and 1373, besieging St-Malo in 1378, and attempting the conquest of Castile from 1386.¹⁰⁸ Robert Ufford, earl of Suffolk, was a close comrade of Edward III's and served regularly in France for more than thirty years, participating on the major *chevauchées* of 1346-7, 1355-6, 1359-60 and 1369, as well as fighting on smaller campaigns, including the English invasion of the Cambrésis in 1339 and the Brittany expeditions of 1342-3.¹⁰⁹ His son, William, the second earl, may well have served under his father in the 1350s, but was certainly summoned to participate on the abortive *chevauchée* of 1372. He was additionally one of the marshals of Gaunt's army the following year, was present at the siege of Quimperlé in Brittany in 1375, and later accompanied Gaunt to St-Malo in 1378.¹¹⁰

The earls of March too were prominent warriors. Roger Mortimer, the second earl (d. 1360), served under the Black Prince at Crécy and lost his life on the Rheims campaign, while his heir, Edmund (d. 1381), continued his father's tradition of military service to the Crown, seeing action in Ireland in 1368, in France in 1369 and

¹⁰⁶ Ayton, 'English Armies in the Fourteenth Century', pp. 303-19; Curry, 'English Armies in the Fifteenth Century', pp. 39-68.

¹⁰⁷ Green, 'Edward the Black Prince and East Anglia', p. 90; Barber, *The Black Prince*, pp. 47-79; Hewitt, *The Black Prince's Expedition*, pp. 195-216; P. E. Russell, *The English Intervention in Spain and Portugal in the Time of Edward III and Richard II* (Oxford, 1955), pp. 83-173.

¹⁰⁸ J. W. Sherborne, 'Indentured Retinues and English Expeditions to France, 1369-1380', *EHR*, lxxix (1964), 722, 728-9, 736; Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 40-1.

¹⁰⁹ W. M. Ormrod, 'Robert Ufford, First Earl of Suffolk', *ODNB*, lv, pp. 856-8.

¹¹⁰ B. Thompson, 'William Ufford, Second Earl of Suffolk', *ODNB*, lv, pp. 858-60.

in Brittany in 1375.¹¹¹ Richard, earl of Arundel (d. 1376), was also a regular participant in the wars of the 1340s and 1350s and in his old age played a key role in financing further expeditions. His heir, Richard (d. 1397), was first armed in Picardy in 1369, served at sea under the earl of Hereford in 1371, participated in the naval blockade of St-Malo in 1378, undertook Richard II's Scottish campaign in 1385, and eventually made his military reputation in naval engagements with the Franco-Castilian fleet, winning praise for his victory off Margate in 1387.¹¹² Like the younger earl of Arundel, Thomas Mowbray was starved of opportunities to add to his family's martial reputation by virtue of the limited military activity of the 1380s and 1390s; yet he at least held garrison commands in Scotland and Calais during these years.¹¹³ When Henry V reignited the French war, Norfolk's surviving magnates remained enthusiastic soldiers. Michael, second de la Pole earl of Suffolk, and his eponymous elder son, both succumbed during the Agincourt campaign in 1415.¹¹⁴ Thomas Beaufort and the young John, second Mowbray duke of Norfolk, and William, fourth de la Pole earl of Suffolk, were all leading commanders during the conquest of Normandy, each receiving an array of territory and offices, as well as recognition with membership of the Order of the Garter.¹¹⁵ Additionally, Norfolk's baronial families, the Morleys, Bardolfs and Scales', as we have seen, were highly active, spawning consecutive generations of military participants throughout the age of the Hundred Years War.¹¹⁶

Since each of these nobles had Norfolk men amongst their core followers, it was natural that the latter should also have seen wide-ranging military action whilst fulfilling their wider obligations to their lord. Hence, the Mowbray retainer, John

¹¹¹ CP, viii, pp. 442-50.

¹¹² Goodman, *The Loyal Conspiracy*, pp. 3, 109.

¹¹³ *Catalogue des Rolles gascons, Normans et françois conservés dans les archives de la Tour de Londres*, ed. T. Carte (London and Paris, 1743), pp. 164, 170, 172; CPR, 1391-6, p. 668.

¹¹⁴ J. H. Wylie and W. T. Waugh *The Reign of Henry the Fifth* (Cambridge, 1914-29), ii, pp. 44-5, 217.

¹¹⁵ C. T. Allmand, *Henry V* (Berkeley, 1992), pp. 81, 102-3, 335, 339, 346; CP, xii (i), pp. 443-5; ix, pp. 605-6; H. E. L. Collins, *The Order of the Garter: Chivalry and Politics in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 292-4.

¹¹⁶ See Chapter Three.

Lancaster, followed Thomas Mowbray to Scotland and France.¹¹⁷ William Rees, having taken out his indenture with Richard, earl of Arundel, was soon fighting in the latter's company in the naval battles of 1387.¹¹⁸ Similarly, men of the royal household naturally accompanied their sovereign on his campaigns. Sir George Felbrigg, an esquire of Edward III's chamber in his youth, served Edward on the Rheims campaign of 1359-60, and decades later, now a member of the Ricardian household, journeyed to Scotland in 1385 and Ireland in 1394.¹¹⁹ Sir Simon Felbrigg, in like fashion, participated on both of Richard's Irish expeditions,¹²⁰ and members of the Beaufort-Erpingham clique, like Sir William Phelip and Sir William Oldhall, were present throughout Beaufort's time in France from 1417 onwards.¹²¹

Despite these examples, however, the earls of Arundel and March, as well as Thomas Mowbray, recruited selectively amongst Norfolk's warrior elite, drawing no more than a handful of leading landowners into their military retinues. As such, there was little opportunity for any Norfolk-based sense of camaraderie to develop within their affinities. By contrast, Edward the Black Prince, John of Gaunt, and Robert Ufford, earl of Suffolk, recruited numerous military retainers in East Anglia, and their affinities, perhaps more than most others, were constructed with specifically military aims in mind.¹²² The Prince's foremost Norfolk retainers shared marked similarities in their war records. Sir William Kerdiston II, Sir Richard Plays and Sir Miles Stapelton had fought together at Crécy. Plays, Stapelton, Sir Thomas Felton, Sir Stephen Hales and Sir Nicholas Dagworth had all served in Gascony and, with the exception of Felton, on the Rheims campaign. Plays died in 1360 and Stapelton in 1363, but the rest continued to serve the Prince in Aquitaine and Spain, accompanied now also by

¹¹⁷ TNA, C76/77, m. 11; *Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland*, ed. G. G. Simpson and J. D. Galbraith (Edinburgh, 1986), v, nos. 4174, 4373.

¹¹⁸ TNA, E101/40/33 m. 1.

¹¹⁹ TNA, E101/393/11, f. 104v; E101/402/20, f. 34; Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, p. 201.

¹²⁰ *CPR*, 1396-9, pp. 554, 579; Milner, 'Sir Simon Felbrigg KG', 85-6.

¹²¹ Worcestre, *Itineraries*, pp. 354-9. See also, for example, 'Norman Rolls', *Forty-second Report of the DKR* (London, 1881), Appendix, p. 415. Hereafter, 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1881), Appendix. See also, 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1883), pp. 627, 631; 'Treaty Rolls', *Forty-eighth Report of the DKR* (London, 1887), p. 226. Hereafter, 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1887).

¹²² Green, 'The Military Personnel of Edward the Black Prince', 133-52; Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 39-80.

Sir William Elmham and Sir Edmund Noon, who appear to have joined the Prince's retinue some time during the early 1360s.¹²³ Likewise, John of Gaunt's active military career during the 1370s and 1380s, as we have seen in the case of the Erpingham circle, drew a variety of Norfolk knights and esquires into his orbit, many of whom served on multiple occasions in France, as well as travelling in their lord's company to Scotland and Spain.¹²⁴ Robert, earl of Suffolk's, military career was longer than either the Black Prince's or Gaunt's. Between him and his equally militarily-active brothers and sons, the Uffords provided long-term opportunities for a variety of soldiers from Norfolk and Suffolk, most prominently Sir Ralph Hemenhale, Sir Robert Scales, Sir Peter Tye and Sir Robert Erpingham. Others who served intermittently in Ufford military retinues included Sir Baldwin Boutetourt, Sir Edmund Cretyng, and the Erpinghams' future kinsman, William Phelip.¹²⁵ Moreover, as we saw in the previous chapter, the Lords Morley participated extensively in the wars of this epoch as co-captains alongside the Uffords.¹²⁶

The impressive war records of these knights and esquires boldly underscore their military prowess and highlight that their active participation in warfare was to a significant degree directly linked to the martial ambitions of their magnate employer, who had brought them into his affinity with a view to making their sword arms his own. As such, any young man aspiring to a military career would have been well served to find himself a regular commander amongst the martially-inclined nobility. The relationship between Norfolk's military community and the county's warrior magnates, though, was not simply a practical matter of military employment. Strong social and cultural ties were forged between military retainers in the same affinity that facilitated the growth of regional solidarities amongst the county's more active soldiers.

We have already witnessed how the overarching authority of the Lancastrian affinity shaped horizontal social relations within the Erpingham circle after 1399. The

¹²³ See Chapter Five for a fuller discussion of the military careers of these gentry.

¹²⁴ For the marked similarities in the war records of Gaunt's military retainers, including those from Norfolk, see Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 262-84.

¹²⁵ Gorski, *The Fourteenth-Century Sheriff*, pp. 21-31; *Testamenta Vetusta*, i, pp. 73-4, 114-15.

¹²⁶ See Chapter Three.

clique around Erpingham was strongly tied to the new Lancastrian court and was a political, as well as a social, organism. The Black Prince's affinity, a few decades earlier, provides a useful contrast, for most of the Prince's East Anglian retainers, at least in their youth, were essentially soldiers seeking a military commander, and they obviously became well acquainted with one another on campaign. Many assisted each other in their land transactions. To cite but one small network of associates, Sir Richard Walkefare's son-in-law, the Prince's tenant, Sir John Strange, granted Tottingham manor to Mary Felton, prioress of Campsey Ash, who was Walkefare's granddaughter.¹²⁷ Mary's parents, Sir Thomas Felton and Joan Walkefare, were benefactors to Walsingham priory and their feoffees included Felton's close military companion, Sir Stephen Hales, who himself founded a chantry at Walsingham.¹²⁸ As for Strange, two of his trusted associates were Sir Ralph Shelton II and Sir Robert Ufford.¹²⁹ Shelton's father had carved out his military career in the Prince's service during the 1340s and 1350s, while Ufford was a younger son of the earl of Suffolk, whose friendship with the Prince has already been noted.¹³⁰ These associations, moreover, in various cases outlasted the Prince's lifetime,¹³¹ while a number of the Prince's military companions, including surviving veterans of Crécy, Poitiers and Najéra, in their later years aligned themselves with his heir and became household knights of the young Richard II.¹³²

There were, however, more telling ways in which solidarities could be formed while fighting in individual military retinues. These military and chivalric connections were most startlingly laid bare before the Court of Chivalry. In the *Scrope v. Grosvenor* dispute, a dozen warriors from the Norfolk-Suffolk region journeyed to London to recount occasions when they had served in war alongside Sir Richard

¹²⁷ Green, 'Edward the Black Prince and East Anglia', p. 93.

¹²⁸ B. Thompson, 'The Church and Aristocracy: Lay and Ecclesiastical Landowning Society in Fourteenth Century Norfolk' (PhD, Cambridge, 1989), pp. 147-8.

¹²⁹ *CCR, 1389-92*, pp. 331-2.

¹³⁰ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 356. For the Uffords, see above.

¹³¹ For the enduring connections among established knightly families associated with the Lords Morley, several of whom also maintained ties with the Black Prince, see Chapter Three.

¹³² Sir Nicholas Dagworth, Sir William Elmham, Sir Thomas Felton, Sir Stephen Hales and Sir Edmund Noon. Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, pp. 283-5.

Scrope and his kinsmen.¹³³ The Scropes were prominent northern retainers of John of Gaunt and several of those Norfolk gentry who spoke for them were either themselves firmly entrenched within the Lancastrian affinity, or else were regular soldiers in Gaunt's military retinue.¹³⁴ The testimony of these men is considerably formulaic, attesting merely that they had served alongside the Scropes and had seen them bearing the arms in dispute. Yet one gains a sense of their admiration for this esteemed northern family in their references to popular knowledge of their deeds in arms. Some referred not only to personal experience, but also to the hearsay of their ancestors. Sir Hugh Hastings III and Sir Robert Morley, whose own families would appear before the Court of Chivalry in coming years, attested that their fathers and grandfathers had made mention to them of the Scropes' possession of the disputed arms.¹³⁵ Sir John White suggested that by public report the arms had belonged to the Scropes since time immemorial.¹³⁶ Sir John Brewes provided a mildly more colourful version of essentially the same claim, stating that he had seen the Scropes bearing the arms since the battle of Mauron in 1352, and that, when Sir Richard Scrope had had his arms challenged during the siege of Calais, Brewes' uncle, Robert Ufford, earl of Suffolk, had expressed his amazement that a family of such ancient gentility should have been so challenged.¹³⁷

Brewes was not a Lancastrian retainer, and neither were Sir Robert Morley or Roger Lord Scales.¹³⁸ The reason for their appearance, as well as that of Sir Stephen Hales, was that the Scropes had also been active in earlier decades in the retinue of Edward the Black Prince. In his capacity as an old member of the Prince's retinue, Hales provided perhaps the most interesting description of why the Scropes deserved to keep their arms. He said that he had seen the Scropes bearing the arms at Rheims

¹³³ Bennett, *Community, Class and Careerism*, pp. 82-3, 166; Morgan, *War and Society in Medieval Cheshire*, pp. 128-30; Rosenthal, *Telling Tales*, pp. 63-94; Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*, pp. 43-70; Bell, *War and the Soldier*, pp. 140-50.

¹³⁴ Sir Hugh Hastings III, Sir Thomas Morieux, Sir Thomas Erpingham, Sir John White, Sir Robert Morley, Sir John Brewes, Roger, fourth Lord Scales, Sir Thomas Geney, Sir Miles Boys, Sir John Wilton, Sir Stephen Hales, Sir William Wingfield. *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, ii, pp. 168-9, 183-7, 194-6, 196-7, 202-3, 208-10, 219-20, 220, 220-1, 231-2, 369-70, 396-7.

¹³⁵ *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, ii, pp. 168-9, 202-3.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, ii, pp. 196-7.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, ii, pp. 208-10.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, ii, pp. 219-20, 202-3, 208-10.

and Najéra, but also that, in his youth, he had heard an old Yorkshire man assert that the ancestors of Sir Richard and Sir Henry Scrope were the finest tourneyers in northern England. He also rather caustically stated that while he had served many times with the Scropes in the Black Prince's retinue, he could never recall any of the Prince's many Cheshire followers bearing the disputed arms, and furthermore he had never heard of Sir Robert Grosvenor until the dispute in question had commenced.¹³⁹

The Scropes' regular participation over several decades in both John of Gaunt's and the Black Prince's affinities evidently shaped their military connections to a significant degree. Those who had served longest with them on the fields of France were men who were themselves established military followers of the two princes. As such, Lancastrians from Norfolk, like Sir Thomas Erpingham, Sir John White, Sir Thomas Morieux, and Sir Hugh Hastings III, appeared before the Court of Chivalry to speak for the Scropes, as did the Black Prince's old soldiers, like Sir Stephen Hales, as well as members of comital families like Sir John Brewes, Sir Robert Morley and Roger Lord Scales. The presence of this handful of Norfolk knights from different affinities underscores, firstly, the importance of noble retinues as a framework in which a sense of comradeship could develop, and secondly, reminds one that the Scropes were highly regarded by their fellow warriors of all noble allegiances, regardless of which military retinue the latter served. By contrast, Grosvenor was a rather obscure figure from the northwest, for whom these well-known Norfolk knights had little regard.

As regards Norfolk's military community, it must be emphasised that if first Edward the Black Prince, and then John of Gaunt, had not been so militarily active during the preceding decades, then these Norfolk knights would not have had the opportunity to serve so regularly alongside the Scropes. The latter had found themselves two regular military employers amongst the royal family. Those who spoke on their behalf had served with them many times on the field of battle precisely because they all happened to have found employment with the same lords. The Scropes, of course, were not Norfolk men, but the same type of long-term mutual service in particular military retinues was undeniably something that clusters of

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, ii, pp. 369-70.

Norfolk knights likewise shared; their sense of common identity too was potentially buttressed by the fact that they collectively may have considered themselves to be the East Anglians in their lord's retinue, with shared regional backgrounds and dialects. This might have been especially so if, as was true of the Black Prince and John of Gaunt, their lord was great enough to acquire considerable numbers of retainers from all over the realm.¹⁴⁰

The East Anglian-centric *Lovel v. Morley* and *Grey v. Hastings* Court of Chivalry cases are even more illustrative of the types of solidarities that could develop within magnate military retinues.¹⁴¹ Thomas Lord Morley was supported by six deponents who stated that they had campaigned regularly under his family's banner.¹⁴² Additionally, four self-professed retainers of Robert Ufford, earl of Suffolk, as well as the younger Sir Robert Ufford, all spoke for the Morleys, very likely as a result of the close association already detailed between these two families.¹⁴³ Moreover, when knightly families were strongly tied to one another, it was obviously comparatively easy for men-at-arms to move freely between their retinues. For instance, the Ufford brothers and their sons were regular retinue commanders together, as were their cousins, Sir John and Sir Roger Norwich. In his testimony on behalf of Lord Morley, William Thweyt described how he had seen most of his five decades of military service under these two families.¹⁴⁴ The picture that develops from the *Lovel v. Morley* dispute is one of interconnected military experience. Robert Lord Morley, as a long-serving soldier at the lower end of the peerage, appeared to have surrounded himself with a small core of regular military followers, who would naturally have seen plenty of action in each other's direct company. Alongside these loyal few were to be found men who could quite easily flit from the Morleys' retinue to those of the Uffords or Norwiches, or indeed to that of the Kerdistons (who, as we have seen, also spoke in defence of the Morleys).¹⁴⁵ As in the case of those Norfolk gentry who spoke for the Scropes, regular military service

¹⁴⁰ Dialect and accent, for example, could have reinforced regional identity in a large-scale, nationally-constructed military retinue. See Chapter Six.

¹⁴¹ See Chapter One.

¹⁴² TNA, C47/6/1, nos. 5, 10, 11, 20, 26, 59.

¹⁴³ Ibid., nos. 13, 39, 42, 92, 48.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., no. 92 (Thweyt served under three different Uffords, as well as Sir John Norwich).

¹⁴⁵ See Chapter Three.

under the command of close-knit war captains, which the Morleys, Uffords, Norwiches, and Kerdistons surely were, allowed groups of East Anglian warriors to become familiar with one another through joint participation in the same companies on multiple military enterprises. Any sense of *esprit de corps* that developed amongst them was not necessarily directly related to loyalty to the affinity in question, but may equally be understood as a bond of circumstance, in which men thrust together in a war-zone came to know and trust each other over the campfire and on the battlefield.

Turning to the *Grey v. Hastings* dispute, Sir Edward Hastings, like the Scropes, was able to call upon the support of his father's and grandfather's old Lancastrian companions, several of whom were knights and esquires from his native Norfolk. These men were not all members of the Lancastrian affinity, but they had all fought consistently under the Lancastrian banner in times of war. Sir Thomas Gerbergh recalled his service alongside Sir Hugh Hastings II and III at Najéra in 1367, in Guienne in 1370, on the earl of Buckingham's expedition in 1380, and on Richard II's Scottish campaign in 1385.¹⁴⁶ Sir Ralph Shelton II described his presence at St-Malo in 1378, in Scotland in 1385, and on Gaunt's Spanish venture from 1386.¹⁴⁷ Also speaking for Hastings were leading members of the Erpingham circle, whose early careers had been forged, sword in hand, in Gaunt's pay. Erpingham himself, Sir Robert Berney and John Reymes outlined their participation in Scotland and Spain,¹⁴⁸ while Sir Simon Felbrigg, Edmund Barry and John Payn II claimed service on the latter expedition.¹⁴⁹ These experienced Norfolk soldiers, speaking in 1407-10, revealed in their statements that their long and proud military records had been made almost exclusively in John of Gaunt's service and in the specific company of Sir Hugh Hastings II and III. Several had been recruited during the early 1380s prior to Gaunt undertaking the 'way of Spain', and a pattern of participation, from St-Malo, to Scotland, to Brest, to Castile, was a common theme in their testimonies.

Despite this overt Lancastrian connection, however, the fact that these men were prepared to come out and speak for the Hastings of Elsing eight years after

¹⁴⁶ *PCM*, i, pp. 498-500.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, i, pp. 423-4.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, i, pp. 439-42, 474-6, 444-5.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, i, pp. 443-4, 392-5, 502-4.

Gaunt's death, and at a time when Henry IV was in waning health, suggests that their adherence to the Hastings' cause was not a Lancastrian directive. This comparatively small group of Norfolk knights had shared an array of youthful experiences during campaigning seasons in France, Scotland and Spain. Their responses before the Court of Chivalry are naturally un-emotive and quite formulaic, detailing simply that they had been on the campaigns in question and had seen the Hastings bearing their arms in battle. Yet, as will be elucidated in Chapter Six, their feelings towards the Hastings certainly may be considered far less bland than the words they proffered in their defence. For the purposes of this chapter, perceived purely in terms of mutual military service in a single magnate retinue, one may emphasise yet again that these Norfolk knights and esquires could remember the same campaigns. As prominent gentry in John of Gaunt's armies, they would have been among his captains and lieutenants and would thus have formed, in modern parlance, his general staff. As such, they would have dined together in camp; they would have organised and executed their lord's strategies; and they would have won booty and martial renown in each other's immediate company, as well as facing the hazards of warfare side by side.

Reinforcing the idea that these formative campaigning experiences engendered lasting friendships in some cases, one may note that several of these young Lancastrian soldiers of the 1380s formed lifelong private associations with each other and displayed long-term loyalty to the affinity they served. Sir Thomas Erpingham mentioned several of his old Lancastrian companions in his will. Sir Robert Berney, in his will, adopted the spiritual traditions propagated by John of Gaunt and followed by several other Lancastrians from disparate parts of the realm. He specifically made injunctions against funeral pomp and asked that this money instead be given to the poor.¹⁵⁰ Finally, of a more chivalric flavour, Sir John Plays, illustrating the strength of Lancastrian bonds across county borders, set up commemorations of his former comrades-in-arms in Gaunt's war retinue, Sir William Beauchamp and Sir John Marmion, neither of whom hailed from East Anglia.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ *Reg Chichele*, iii, p. 409. In the words of Simon Walker, Gaunt and many of his knightly retainers "combined an ascetic tendency towards funeral austerity and penitential rhetoric in their wills with a new social awareness, manifested in their interest in the foundation of hospitals and poor houses". Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, p. 100.

¹⁵¹ Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, p. 110.

All of this highlights how closely attached military companions could become. Long-term bonds could evolve amongst gentry soldiers who served regularly with the same body of men, and these connections could remain strong regardless of how heavily these soldiers were, or were not, involved with the affinity under whose banner they were fighting.¹⁵² These differences are apparent amongst Sir Edward Hastings' deponents. While Erpingham and Berney were strongly attached to their fellow Lancastrians and to the house of Lancaster itself, Sir Ralph Shelton II and Sir Thomas Gerbergh were never active Lancastrians at all. Gerbergh in fact, as we have seen, was most intimately connected with Edmund of Langley, duke of York, while the Sheltons had old family ties with the Black Prince's affinity. The common link between those old soldiers who spoke in defence of the Hastings' arms was not membership of the Lancastrian affinity, but extensive military experience under John of Gaunt in his guise as an active warrior magnate.

What these three Court of Chivalry disputes reinforce is that magnate military enterprises provided a framework that allowed groups of Norfolk knights to jointly experience the fear and exhilaration of warfare with sword in hand. If a great lord was regularly active on overseas expeditions, this fact alone could facilitate the development of *esprit de corps* amongst his regular military followers, even if that sense of *esprit of corps* itself was not, per se, centred around loyalty to the affinity in question. Simon Walker's research into the Lancastrian affinity provides a telling statistic that supports this assertion. Walker discovered that very few Lancastrian soldiers participated on successive campaigns under John of Gaunt, and that many of those who did were doubtless still awaiting payment for the previous expedition and figured that maintaining the connection would heighten their prospects of eventually being paid.¹⁵³ As it relates to Norfolk's military community, what this means is that those men like Erpingham, Berney, Gerbergh and Shelton, who served on three or four, or more, campaigns under Gaunt, would have had an even greater chance of getting to know each other well whilst in the saddle, since there would have been

¹⁵² The classic Norfolk example of friendship overriding the politics of lordship is the continuing association between Sir Thomas Erpingham and Sir Simon Felbrigg after the usurpation of 1399. See Chapter Three.

¹⁵³ Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 50-3.

comparatively few familiar faces on each new campaign, and within this minority of veterans the number of East Anglians involved would have been fewer still. The same may be said for those Norfolk knights and esquires who fought regularly beneath the banner of Edward the Black Prince, Robert Ufford, earl of Suffolk, or later under John Mowbray, duke of Norfolk, and William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk. Judging from these three disputes, therefore, one may say that a certain measure of camaraderie appears to have existed amongst long serving comrades-in-arms. Whether this was more than a bond of circumstance within individual magnate military retinues will form the central theme of the following two chapters.

Conclusion

Norfolk county society between 1350 and 1430 was not rife with political faction. In these conditions it was possible for the region's greater gentry to serve numerous lords simultaneously in a variety of capacities, as estate officials, councillors and soldiers. As men of regional importance, they were readily snapped up by the nobility, who rightly perceived such men as a link between them and their lesser tenants, especially since Norfolk was a county that most absentee nobles rarely visited. The tasks these leading county figures performed for their lords were varied, and the knightly elite for the most part combined military and civilian duties. The rewards they received were equally varied, some being paid from the fees charged on particular manors, others acquiring annuities or paying jobs, and a lucky few receiving all of these forms of payment, with additional gifts and grants thrown in for good measure. Many of Norfolk's most successful careerists, both soldiers and civilians, prospered in magnate pay between 1350 and 1430, even though the majority never attached themselves wholesale to a single noble affinity. Nonetheless, it is clear that sponsorship and patronage were of vital importance to the upwardly mobile and to those seeking to maintain and further enhance their already prominent positions in county society.

For the warrior gentry too, war service in a single magnate retinue played an essential role in uniting segments of Norfolk's military community. Shared military experiences as joint members of individual affinities were pivotal to the development

of soldierly bonds amongst the county's military elite.¹⁵⁴ True, Norfolk knights of all allegiances served on major campaigns like those of Crécy, Rheims, Agincourt, or the Normandy conquest, but an all important distinction must be drawn between this type of service and the more intimate associations developed by the members of a single retinue. By serving in the same company time and again, Norfolk captains appear, from their testimony before the Court of Chivalry, to have developed a degree of camaraderie in many circumstances.¹⁵⁵

Norfolk's gentry military community, however, did not merely comprise men who carved out careers fighting for particular magnate affinities over long periods of time. It was much more broadly composed of men of greater and lesser degree, some rich, some poor, mostly armigerous, but not all knighted. Some found stable employment with long-term noble commanders and others did not. Some sought to live from the profits of war, others served at intervals, returning home to tend to their landed estates. In light of these complexities, the next chapter will turn directly to examine the county's military community, beginning with the one life event that all of those within this community had in common - military service in the king's wars.

¹⁵⁴ For the wider implications of shared military experience, see Chapters Six and Seven.

¹⁵⁵ For the East Anglian context to the *Lovel v. Morley* and *Grey v. Hastings* disputes, see Chapter Six.

MILITARY SERVICE

England's ancient knightly elite was essentially a military caste, in which the martial traditions of their ancestors gave each new generation deeds worth emulating.¹ Between 1350 and 1430, as we have seen, the line between the knightly class and the rest of the gentry became increasingly blurred. By the latter date, numerous esquires had achieved armorial bearings directly as a result of their chivalrous conduct in the king's wars at a time when the knight and esquire were quite literally closing ranks on the battlefield. The dismounted man-at-arms was becoming more prominent, and, as such, in the heat of combat men-at-arms of all ranks found themselves fighting shoulder to shoulder, accoutred and armed with the same equipment and displaying comparable skill in its usage.² These developments opened the door for the martially-inclined man of talent - the career soldier - to advance himself through his military expertise. Yet military service was inevitably a gamble, in which the loss of life, limb and personal fortune was weighed against the potential for significant profit. Other factors too influenced the decision-making of the warrior gentry. There remained strong feudal and at times contractual obligations to serve in the king's wars, especially for those gentry whose own lord was intending to participate. Military service was central both to the esteem in which a knight or esquire was held by his neighbours, and to his own sense of self-worth. This latter theme will be taken up in greater detail in the following chapter.

For now, though, one will focus specifically upon three aspects of military careerism amongst Norfolk's gentry: firstly, the extent of their contribution to the wars of the mid-to-late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries; secondly, the balancing act played by these soldiers as they sought to profit from their military careers without sustaining unrecoverable losses; and finally, the advantages gained and the difficulties encountered by these men as they attempted to reintegrate themselves into Norfolk county society. In terms of overall structure, although

¹ Ayton, 'English Armies in the Fourteenth Century', pp. 303-19; Curry, 'English Armies in the Fifteenth Century', pp. 39-68.

² Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses*, pp. 1-8, 224-9; Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages*, pp. 12-56; Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*, pp. 71-86.

Norfolk's militarily-active greater gentry remain our protagonists, the wider implications of soldiering and its effect upon the region's military community cannot be adequately understood by focusing upon so narrow a body of military participants. Lesser gentry soldiers appear relatively infrequently by name in surviving source materials, yet, as touched upon in Chapter One, through the Court of Chivalry disputes involving the Morleys and Hastings it is possible to catch a glimpse of East Anglia's warrior class at its lower reaches. Norfolk soldiers hailed from a variety of backgrounds, including great knightly landowners, wealthy esquires, landless younger sons from prominent families, humble lesser gentry, career soldiers originally from beyond the county, and even the occasional warrior raised from common stock into genteel society by virtue of his martial prowess. All require consideration in order to fully appreciate the composition of Norfolk's gentry 'military community'.

War Service and the Norfolk Gentry

Throughout the age of the Hundred Years War, the opportunities for Norfolk's gentry to participate in war were extensive. A handful of Norfolk men counted amongst Edward III's most trusted captains from the very onset of the conflict. Indeed, the first expedition sent to France, in July 1337, was commanded by the Norfolk knight, Sir John Norwich, who joined forces with the seneschal of Gascony, Oliver Lord Ingham, another man from the county, before the two of them raised the French siege at Blaye.³ From this point, the next decade saw Norfolk's knightly elite entrusted with a variety of important commands and lieutenancies. The reinforcements sent to aid Norwich and Ingham the following March were led by Norwich's younger brother, Sir Roger.⁴ Robert Lord Morley, named admiral of the north fleet in February 1339, defended the Cinque Ports against a French attack, before countering this incursion by raiding the Normandy coast.⁵ The next year, Morley played a decisive role in the English naval victory at Sluys, receiving

³ TNA, C61/49 mm. 16, 21; E101/19/39, m. 1; *Foedera*, ii, p. 1023; Sumption, *The Hundred Years War I*, pp. 235-6.

⁴ A. Verduyn, 'John Norwich, First Lord Norwich', *ODNB*, xli, p. 199.

⁵ TNA, C47/6/1, no. 20; *Chronicon Henrici Knighton*, ed. J. R. Lumby (London, R.S., 1895), ii, p. 10.

enthusiastic praise from the contemporary poet, Laurence Minot.⁶ The 1345-7 campaigns into Brittany and Normandy, which firmly established the English as the finest fighting force in the western Europe, likewise witnessed widespread participation by Norfolk's greater gentry. Several of the county's most experienced warriors, including Morley, Norwich, John Lord Bardolf and Sir William Kerdiston II, served throughout these years, as did their younger contemporaries, Sir Richard Plays, Sir Edmund Thorpe I and Sir Thomas Felton, to name but a few of the county's more prominent Crécy veterans.⁷ Although Norwich, Bardolf and Kerdiston retired after the siege of Calais, there existed considerable continuity of personnel in the Edwardian armies of this epoch. Sir Miles Stapelton, for example, was in arms from the siege of Tournai in 1340 until his death in 1364.⁸ Sir John Brewes was at the siege of Calais in 1347 and was still campaigning over three decades later.⁹ Sir Hugh Hastings II participated extensively on the expeditions of the 1350s and returned to the fray in 1369 when the war was reignited.¹⁰ Younger men, who caught the tail end of Edward III's glory days, in several cases likewise undertook decades of military service. Sir John Plays first served on the Rheims campaign of 1359-60 and was still fighting the French at St-Malo in 1378,¹¹ while Sir Thomas Gerbergh began his career in arms in Spain in 1367 and ended it in Scotland in 1385.¹²

Moving beyond individual examples drawn from the knightly elite, military careers spanning the generations are a regular feature amongst those highly active old soldiers who spoke for Thomas Lord Morley before the Court of Chivalry in 1386-7. The bald figures alone highlight that there were numerous East Anglian gentry of all ranks present at most of the key English victories of the high Edwardian age. Of Morley's 102 lay deponents, fifteen men claimed service at the sea battle of Sluys in 1340 and twenty at Winchelsea a decade later. Twenty-three asserted their presence at

⁶ *Political Poems and Songs relating to English History composed during the period From the Accession of Edward III to that of Richard II*, ed. T. Wright, 2 vols. (London, 1859), i, pp. 70-2.

⁷ *CP*, ix, p. 213; Wrottesley, *Crécy and Calais*, pp. 90, 92, 168-9, 189, 198, 207; *Foedera*, iii, p. 120, i, p. 324; *CP*, vii, p. 192; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 598; Morgan, 'Sir Thomas Felton', *ODNB*, ix, pp. 286-7.

⁸ Lee-Warner, 'The Stapletons of Ingham', 200; *CP*, vii, p. 63.

⁹ *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, i, p. 63; *Catalogue des Rolles gascons*, ed. Carte, ii, p. 142.

¹⁰ E.g. TNA, C76/38 m. 16; C76/52 m. 10.

¹¹ TNA, E101/393/11, f. 7v; C81/985 (64).

¹² *PCM*, i, pp. 498-500.

Crécy in 1346, thirty-one recalled the siege of Calais in 1347, and forty-one declared that they had stood before the gates of Paris in 1360.¹³ A few men also described their participation on smaller, non-royal expeditions. One testator was at Buironfosse in 1339, three on the Brittany expedition in 1342-3, and one at the battle of Auberoche in 1345.¹⁴ Importantly too, twenty-seven described their service on John of Gaunt's *chevauchée* in 1369, following a decade of truce, reminding one that those who waged unsuccessful war against King Charles V and Bertrand du Guesclin in the late 1360s and 1370s were not wholly a younger generation failing to live up to their predecessors' achievements.¹⁵ Indeed, those who deponed for Sir Edward Hastings in 1407-10, although fewer in number than Morley's testators,¹⁶ largely picked up where the latter's witnesses had left off. The main weight of their testimony was centred in the 1370s and 1380s, when Sir Edward's father, Sir Hugh III, was at his most active. Three men fought on Gaunt's *chevauchée* in 1373,¹⁷ eight recalled their service at St-Malo in 1378,¹⁸ and twelve were on Buckingham's expedition in 1380.¹⁹

These two Court of Chivalry disputes between them refer to expeditions ranging from 1333 to 1400. As such, they provide us with a glimpse of the careers of some of East Anglia's most militarily-active knights and esquires over several generations. What many of these men had in common was firstly, that they were very young, often adolescents, when first armed, and secondly, that many were well and truly middle-aged when they hung up their swords.²⁰ In this context the remarkable overlap in personnel from one campaign to the next represents a natural corollary. Even taken over a relatively brief timeframe, this trend is noticeable. Sir William Pembridge, Sir Richard Sutton, and the esquires William Sutton, John Raven, Henry Hoo, Robert Caly, and John atte Church were all present at Crécy, Calais and Rheims,²¹ while

¹³ Derived from analysis of the surviving testimony. TNA, C47/6/1. Confirmed by Ayton, 'Armorial Cases before the Court of Chivalry', pp. 91-2.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid. For a summary of the Anglo-French conflict during the 1370s, see C. T. Allmand, *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War c. 1300-c. 1450* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 20-6.

¹⁶ Only forty-two witnesses identified campaigns on which they had served.

¹⁷ *PCM*, i, pp. 413, 495, 529.

¹⁸ Ibid., i, pp. 329, 390, 405, 423, 435, 458, 478, 492.

¹⁹ Ibid., i, pp. 329, 404, 405, 413, 427, 435, 458, 478, 486, 496, 497, 500.

²⁰ See also, Keen, 'English Military Experience and the Court of Chivalry', p. 180.

²¹ TNA, C47/6/1, nos. 7, 38, 5, 6, 10, 14, 16.

Raven and atte Church additionally fought at Sluys and Winchelsea.²² Hugh Curson undertook a brief but incredibly intensive period of military service around the same time. He spent the summer and autumn of 1345 in Aquitaine, was first armed at the siege of Langon, participated in the capture of Bergerac, fought in Henry of Grosmont's victory at Auberoche, moved on to besiege La Rivele, and finished his tour of duty with the Crécy campaign. All of this service was undertaken beneath the banner of Sir John Norwich, who was one of Grosmont's leading bannerets.²³ Finally, thirty of Morley's deponents declared that their careers had spanned more than twenty years, and perhaps most energetically (and his is an extreme case), the Norfolk esquire William Thweyt remained in the saddle for over five decades.²⁴

By contrast, Hastings' witnesses were prevented by the truce years of the 1390s and 1400s from developing war records of this ilk. Yet one still finds in men like Sir Thomas Erpingham and Sir Simon Felbrigg, who both spoke for Hastings, a readiness to return to arms for the Agincourt campaign in 1415, more than three decades after they had first seen action.²⁵ Thus, even when focusing purely upon the warrior gentry of a single region, there was to be found throughout the Hundred Years War a blend of youth and experience amongst English combatants. The young Norfolk men cutting their military teeth on the Rheims expedition of 1359-60 would have stood arrayed before the gates of Paris alongside fellow Norfolk men who were veterans of Sluys, Crécy-Calais, Winchelsea and Poitiers. Similarly, men who could recall the campaign of 1359-60 in due course became the experienced warriors of the 1370s and 1380s, while a few of the latter, those who remained in good health long enough, became the grey-haired participants of Henry V's expeditionary forces.

Norfolk's warrior gentry too did not limit themselves to service in France. For men of martial enthusiasm there was action to be found closer to home against England's other traditional foe, Scotland.²⁶ Many of the county's most prominent

²² Ibid., nos. 6, 16.

²³ Ibid., no. 99; TNA C76/22 m. 7d; E101/25/9 m. 3.

²⁴ TNA, C47/6/1, no. 92. In Thweyt's case, Andrew Ayton has uncovered various other campaigns on which Thweyt served that he did not mention in his deposition. Ayton, 'William de Thweyt, Esquire', 731-8.

²⁵ *PCM*, i, pp. 439-42, 443-4; TNA, E101/44/30 no. 3 m. 3; E101/45/3 m. 1.

²⁶ For these campaigns, see Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots*.

middle-aged landowners of the 1350s, like Robert Lord Morley and Sir John Norwich, had seen extensive military service in their youth during Edward III's early Scottish campaigns in the 1330s.²⁷ East Anglian soldiers of lesser rank were there as well. Five of Morley's oldest testators claimed participation at King Edward's first notable battlefield triumph at Halidon Hill in 1333.²⁸ The Scots persistently posed a threat as a Francophile neighbour of England and Norfolk men continued to be present in numbers against them, primarily on royally-led expeditions. In 1385, when Richard II summoned the feudal levy for the last time and successfully constructed the largest field army since Crécy, his force included numerous Norfolk knights and esquires.²⁹ Eighteen of Sir Edward Hastings' deponents claimed participation on this expedition,³⁰ while even long-retired older soldiers, like Sir Stephen Hales, who had not campaigned since 1367, dusted off their armour and took to the field.³¹

The Scots, of course, were not England's only internal enemy. Richard II led two Irish expeditions in 1394 and 1399, on which a smattering of Norfolk men participated.³² Several were unsurprisingly attached to the royal household, but a few prominent gentry with Appellant connections also took out letters of protection for these campaigns.³³ Moreover, with garrisons to maintain and an unstable native population to cow, service in Ireland offered a regular source of income for men of martial appetite. Sir John Fastolf and Sir John Radcliffe, two future Garter Knights, saw some of their early military service there during the reign of Henry IV.³⁴ Within England too, the internecine strife that afflicted the realm at the turn of the fifteenth century presented Norfolk's gentry with plentiful chances to see action. The crisis of 1387-8 would, to some extent, have pitted the Appellants' retainers against Richard

²⁷ *Foedera*, ii, p. 702; *CP*, ix, p. 212; *CCR*, 1333-7, p. 736; *CPR*, 1321-4, p. 184; *Rot. Scot.*, i, p. 286.

²⁸ TNA, C47/6/1, nos. 10, 29, 92, 97, 106.

²⁹ N. B. Lewis, 'The Last Medieval Summons of the English Feudal Levy, 13 June 1385', *EHR*, lxxiii (1958), 1-26.

³⁰ *PCM*, i, pp. 329, 401, 405, 413, 421, 423, 425, 439, 444, 451, 456, 458, 464, 474, 495, 496, 519, 533.

³¹ *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, i, p. 163; TNA, E403/508 m. 21.

³² For these campaigns, see E. Curtis, *Richard II in Ireland* (Oxford, 1927).

³³ E.g. Sir George Felbrigg, Sir Simon Felbrigg, John Reymes. TNA, E101/402/20, f. 34; *CPR*, 1391-6, pp. 473, 476, 563, 601; *Foedera*, viii, p. 78.

³⁴ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 155.

II's household men, perhaps even in direct combat at Radcot Bridge.³⁵ Certainly upon Henry of Bolingbroke's landing in 1399, the pro-Ricardian, Sir William Elmham, immediately declared for his royal lord, becoming the most prominent Norfolk knight to do so, at a time when most of those gentry who would later be identified with the Erpingham circle were flying to the Lancastrian standard.³⁶ In subsequent years, the latter especially found themselves serving in the kingdom's northwest. Henry IV's Scottish campaign of 1400 was that on which the young Sir Edward Hastings had his arms challenged by Lord Grey.³⁷ Other Norfolk captains who undertook this expedition included experienced warriors like Sir Simon Felbrigg and Sir John Curson, but also younger men looking to cut their military teeth, like Hastings himself.³⁸ With so many fervent Lancastrians amongst Norfolk's county elite, one naturally would have expected that some at least might have continued on to see service in Wales or against the Percy and Scrope rebels. Certainly Sir Thomas Erpingham was entrusted with the key position of Marshal of England in 1404 and Prince Henry's active role in subduing the Welsh likely drew his Norfolk-born household men across the border.³⁹

On the continent too, those seeking fame, fortune and chivalric recognition could ply their art during periods of truce with France. Sir Nicholas Dagworth and Sir William Elmham, for example, hired themselves out as mercenaries to the Free Companies during the 1360s.⁴⁰ Also during this decade, retainers of the Black Prince became heavily involved in the defence of Aquitaine. Sir Miles Stapelton saw his final years of military service there,⁴¹ while Sir Thomas Felton was charged with

³⁵ J. N. L. Myres, 'The Campaign of Radcot Bridge in December 1387', *EHR*, xlii (1927), 20-33.

³⁶ 'Annales Ricardi Secundi et Henrici Quarti', ed. Riley, p. 246; TNA, DL42/15 pt. I f. 70; Raimes, 'Reymes of Overstrand', 29-31; Castor, *The King, the Crown and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 59.

³⁷ *PCM*, i, p. 273.

³⁸ TNA, E101/41/1 mm. 38, 4, 50.

³⁹ Walker, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', *ODNB*, xviii, p. 513. For Prince Henry's Welsh campaigns, see R. Griffiths, 'Prince Henry and Wales, 1400-1408', *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England*, ed. M. A. Hicks (Gloucester, 1990), pp. 51-61.

⁴⁰ Russell, *English Intervention in Spain and Portugal*, p. 39; Jean Froissart, *Chroniques*, ed. S. Luce et. al. (Paris, 1869-1975), vi, p. 201; *Foedera*, III, ii, p. 779; K. Fowler, *Medieval Mercenaries I: The Great Companies* (Oxford, 2001), p. 326.

⁴¹ *CP*, vii, pp. 62-3.

numerous administrative duties in the province.⁴² Established adherents of the Prince, like Felton and Sir Stephen Hales, additionally served on their lord's Spanish venture of 1366-7, seeing action at Najéra, as did younger Norfolk men, like Sir Thomas Gerbergh and Sir Robert Morley, who would each enjoy intensive military careers in their own right during the 1370s.⁴³ Two decades later, the Iberian Peninsula once again provided Norfolk's gentry with an opportunity to sate their martial appetites. John of Gaunt, as we have seen, actively recruited in the county prior to these expeditions and there was to be found a considerable Norfolk presence amongst Gaunt's body of captains. Sir Thomas Morieux was chosen as the marshal of the Lancastrian army and eighteen of Sir Edward Hastings' testators before the Court of Chivalry claimed service on this campaign.⁴⁴

Lastly, the Crusade, that most chivalrous of enterprises, attracted a surprisingly impressive array of East Anglian participants during the fourteenth century.⁴⁵ The Order of Teutonic Knights feted and feasted the knightly elite of Western Europe in its efforts to lure them into service against the heathen Lithuanians.⁴⁶ Crusades to Prussia were undertaken privately by various English nobles and gentry, predominantly in periods of truce with France, most notably in the years 1347-52, 1362-8 and 1390-8.⁴⁷ Henry of Grosmont, duke of Lancaster, was among the most admired crusader knights of his generation and since he was one of Norfolk's principal landholders and possessed a strong body of retainers in the region, a few men from the county would doubtless have accompanied him on his pious undertakings.⁴⁸ While the source materials are limited, several of the region's gentry are known to have served on the *Reisen* of this era. Sir Thomas Ufford, son of Robert,

⁴² His most prestigious appointments was as seneschal of Aquitaine. Morgan, 'Sir Thomas Felton', xix, pp. 286-7.

⁴³ Ibid.; *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, i, p. 163; *PCM*, i, pp. 498-500, 421-3.

⁴⁴ Jean Froissart, *Chronicles: In Lord Berners' Translation*, selected, edited and introduced by G. Anderson and W. Anderson (London, 1963), iv, p. 287; *PCM*, i, pp. 393, 397, 399, 401, 421, 423, 425, 439, 443, 444, 445, 474, 478, 495, 500, 502, 509, 513.

⁴⁵ For the general importance of crusading to late medieval English knights, see M. H. Keen, 'Chaucer's Knight, the English Aristocracy and the Crusade', *Nobles, Knights and Men-At-Arms in the Middle Ages* (London, 1996), pp. 101-19.

⁴⁶ C. Tyerman, *England and the Crusades 1095-1588* (Chicago, 1988), pp. 259-301.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 268.

⁴⁸ Fowler, *Henry of Grosmont*, pp. 45-7.

earl of Suffolk, fought with the Teutonic Knights in 1348, 1362 and 1365;⁴⁹ on the second of these journeys, Ufford was accompanied by the Norfolk knight, Sir Robert Howard;⁵⁰ the following year, Sir Richard Waldegrave, a prominent East Anglian retainer of the Black Prince, traveled with the earl of Hereford to southern Turkey and was present at the capture of Satalia, while Sir Miles Stapelton also served with Hereford in the eastern Mediterranean.⁵¹ John Lord Mowbray, father of Thomas, the Earl Marshal, was killed by Muslims in 1368 and buried in the Dominican convent in Galata outside Constantinople. Finally, Earl Thomas himself, after his banishment by Richard II, died at Venice upon his return from a pilgrimage to Palestine.⁵²

The declarations made by those who deposed in favour of Sir Edward Hastings before the Court of Chivalry add further colour to these glimpses of East Anglian crusading zeal. John Parker recounted the story he had been told that Sir Hugh Hastings II had first seen military action against the Saracens.⁵³ Robert Fyshlake and Alexander Denton recalled accompanying Sir Hugh III to the eastern Mediterranean and to Jerusalem, and stated that Sir Hugh had left an escutcheon of his arms in all the important places where they had stopped along the way, including at the residence of the Hospitallers at Rhodes.⁵⁴ Later generations of English crusaders, those of the 1390s, similarly included amongst their number a few prominent Norfolk gentry. Thomas Lord Morley appears likely to have travelled to Prussia in the company of his good friend, Thomas of Woodstock, duke of Gloucester.⁵⁵ John Payn II followed his young lord, Henry of Bolingbroke, on his *Reisen* in 1390 and 1392,⁵⁶ as did Sir Thomas Erpingham, who declared before the Court of Chivalry that whilst in Prussia he had seen the Hastings' arms displayed in Marienberg Cathedral.⁵⁷ Lastly, between these two periods of intensive crusading, one

⁴⁹ *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum*, ed. T. Hirsch, M. Teoppén, and E. Strehlke (Leipzig, 1861-74), ii, pp. 514, 531, 549, 551.

⁵⁰ *CPR, 1361-4*, pp. 251-2.

⁵¹ *Anonimale Chronicle*, ed. Galbraith, pp. 51, 170 n. 51; *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, i, pp. 165-6.

⁵² Goodman, *John of Gaunt*, p. 163; *CP*, ix, p. 604.

⁵³ *PCM*, i, p. 533.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, i, pp. 429, 453.

⁵⁵ *Foedera*, vii, p. 706.

⁵⁶ *Expeditions to Prussia and the Holy Land Made by Henry earl of Derby*, ed. L. Toulmin-Smith, 2 vols. (London, Camden Soc., New Series, lii, 1894), i, p. 128.

⁵⁷ *PCM*, i, p. 441.

cannot ignore Bishop Henry Despenser of Norwich's failed campaign into Flanders in 1383.⁵⁸ Sir William Elmham, a personal friend of the bishop, appears to have played the central part in organising the expedition, in so doing successfully drawing several Norfolk knights into the bishop's service.⁵⁹

The military ventures of the fourteenth century evidently kept Norfolk's martially-inclined gentry occupied, yet the return to full-scale hostilities with the French that followed Henry V's accession to the throne ushered in a new, albeit brief, halcyon age for the warrior gentry, comparable to the great years of the 1340s and 1350s.⁶⁰ Most able-bodied members of the Erpingham circle served on the Agincourt campaign. Aside from Erpingham and Sir Simon Felbrigg, whose participation has already been noted, others who made the journey in 1415 included Sir John Clifton, Sir William Phelip, John Curson jr, John Lancaster III, Sir Henry Noon, Sir John Fastolf and Sir John Radcliffe.⁶¹ Once the conquest of Normandy was underway, administrative positions in captured castles and towns were on offer to enterprising commanders, and several Norfolk knights made their fortunes in the English *pays*.⁶² Captains who took out letters of protection over the course of the Normandy conquest included Clifton, Phelip, Curson, Fastolf and Radcliffe, as well as Sir Edmund Thorpe II, Sir Henry Inglose, Sir William Bardolf, Sir Robert Harling and Sir William Oldhall.⁶³ Most of these men remained in France for the better part of the 1420s, and a few, notably Harling, Radcliffe, Fastolf and Oldhall, stayed much longer, last seeing action across the Channel in 1435, 1436, 1439 and 1445 respectively.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Magee, 'Sir William Elmham', 181-90.

⁵⁹ J. Magee, 'Politics, Society and the Crusade, 1378-1400' (D. Phil, Leicester, 1998), Appendix i, pp. 231-2.

⁶⁰ R. A. Newhall, *The English Conquest of Normandy 1416-1424* (New Haven, 1924); Allmand, *Lancastrian Normandy*.

⁶¹ A. Curry, *Agincourt: A New History* (Stroud, 2005), pp. 282-300.

⁶² C. T. Allmand, 'The Lancastrian Land Settlement in Normandy, 1417-1450', *EcHR*, Second Series, xxi (1968), 461-79; R. A. Massey, 'The Land Settlement in Lancastrian Normandy', *Property and Politics: Essays in Later Medieval English History*, ed. A. J. Pollard (Gloucester, 1984), pp. 76-96; Allmand, *Lancastrian Normandy*, pp. 50-121.

⁶³ 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1880), Appendix i, pp. 601, 612, 683, 696, 711, 730; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1883), Appendix, pp. 592, 593; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1887), pp. 225, 245.

⁶⁴ McFarlane, 'The Investment of Sir John Fastolf's Profits of War', pp. 178, 203; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, pp. 158-9; Roskell, 'Sir William Oldhall', 97-8.

Lastly, beyond these various military theatres, naval service offered employment much closer to home.⁶⁵ The county's geographical position meant that its gentry were among those charged with the defence of the Channel coast, and this proved no meaningless duty. A large number of towns along the kingdom's southern and eastern shores were subjected to harassment by Franco-Castilian fleets from the very beginning of the wars with France, at which time Norfolk's gentry were evidently fearful that Yarmouth would be overrun, leaving Norwich vulnerable to water-borne attack.⁶⁶ Even after the naval victory at Sluys put the French on the back foot, lightning raids upon English soil continued at intervals, providing a permanent source of concern for the eastern counties. Edward III undertook stringent defensive measures prior to his major campaigns in 1346-7, 1356 and 1359-60, aware of the possibility of a counter-attack while the bulk of his fighting force was in France.⁶⁷ Although no invasion eventuated, Edward's fears were to some degree confirmed in March 1360 when the French raided England's southern coastline, sacking Winchelsea, and sending tremors through all the coastal counties, including Norfolk.⁶⁸ The truce years of the 1360s brought some respite, yet the 1370s and 1380s proved as threatening as had been the 1338-40 period. The French launched a series of hit-and-run attacks during these decades. In 1377, Rye was captured and burnt in June, the Isle of Wight was invaded in August, Carisbrooke Castle was besieged, and a host of other coastal towns, including Yarmouth, were menaced.⁶⁹ Moreover, in 1385 and 1386, a veritable panic broke out upon the news that the French intended to invade in

⁶⁵ C. Richmond, 'English Naval Power in the Fifteenth Century', *History*, lii (1967), 1-15; J. W. Sherborne, 'The Hundred Years War: The English Navy: Shipping and Manpower, 1369-1389', *Past and Present*, xxxvii (1967), 163-75; C. Richmond, 'The War at Sea', *The Hundred Years War*, ed. K. Fowler (London, 1971), pp. 96-121.

⁶⁶ *CCR*, 1337-9, p. 569.

⁶⁷ *TNA*, C76/23 mm. 3v, 16, 19v, 25v; *Foedera*, III, ii, pp. 105-7; *CCR*, 1354-60, pp. 209, 214-15.

⁶⁸ *Chronicon Angliae auctore monacho quodam Sancti Albani*, ed. E. M. Thompson (London, R.S., 1874), pp. 40-1; *Chronicon Henrici Knighton*, ii, p. 109; *Thomas Walsingham Historia Anglicana*, ed. H. T. Riley (London, R.S., 1863-4), i, p. 287; *CPR*, 1358-61, p. 415.

⁶⁹ *Chronicon Angliae*, ed. Thompson, pp. 151-2, 166-8; *Thomas Walsingham Historia Anglicana*, ed. Riley, i, pp. 340-2; *CCR*, 1385-9, p. 356; *CIM*, 1377-86, pp. 78, 205-6.

force and in so doing “destroy the English tongue...and imbue the realm with a new tongue” - a rumour that had regularly circulated since the reign of Edward I.⁷⁰

Although these years marked the highpoint of national hysteria regarding a French assault on the kingdom, protection of the coast remained an important expectation of Norfolk’s gentry. Indeed, from this brief sketch of Channel defence, it becomes plain just how strongly the inhabitants of the eastern counties were identified with the seaways they protected. Certainly it would be reasonable to suggest that many Norfolk men, particularly those living near the sea, would have become fine sailors. At a command level, at any rate, a feel for the water could prove decisive in a tight naval engagement. Robert Lord Morley, Sir John Norwich and Sir John Howard were all considered among the most adept naval commanders of their generation, named regularly as admirals of the northern fleet.⁷¹ This nautical bent amongst individual Norfolk soldiers is perhaps best illustrated in the careers of lesser gentry from the region who spoke before the Court of Chivalry. In *Lovel v. Morley*, as we have seen, fifteen of Thomas Lord Morley’s deponents recalled their participation at Sluys and twenty at Winchelsea. One witness in particular, a certain Thomas Rose, appears to have been especially active in the war at sea. He fought in both of these famous victories and additionally could recall the burning of five towns during Lord Morley’s raid upon the Normandy coast in 1339.⁷² As Rose was mentioning only those occasions when a Morley was present, it seems quite likely that a man with his record might have had a naval career that was considerably longer. The careers in arms of other testators, like the esquires, John Raven and Esmond Breton, who were also at Sluys and Winchelsea, reinforce that there was gainful employment to be found at sea for militarily-active Norfolk men.⁷³ In later generations too, opportunities of this type continued. Thomas Lord Morley and Sir Hugh Hastings III were present at the earl of Pembroke’s defeat off La Rochelle in 1372,⁷⁴ while Sir Edmund Noon, Sir William Elmham, Sir John Ingoldesthorpe and William Rees appear to have

⁷⁰ As quoted from Alban, ‘English Coastal Defence’, p. 58.

⁷¹ E.g. *CCR*, 1349-54, p. 303; *CPR*, 1334-8, p. 56; *CPR*, 1345-8, p. 558.

⁷² TNA, C47/6/1, no. 20.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, nos. 6, 44.

⁷⁴ *PCM*, i, pp. 435-9. Since Morley bothered to mention his service at La Rochelle in Sir Edward Hastings’ defence, by inference Hastings’ father was probably also present.

participated in the earl of Arundel's victory off Margate in 1387.⁷⁵ These men were by no means professional sailors. They all fought on land as well as at sea, for there was no English royal navy during the Middle Ages. All the same, seasickness, or a lack of feel for the turn of the current and the vicissitudes of the weather, could make a perfectly capable man-at-arms a liability in a sea-battle. These East Anglian warriors proved themselves capable of fighting effectively on the water as well as on land, thereby adding another string to their bow and making themselves well worth employing.

This depiction of the Norfolk gentry's contribution to the wars of the 1350 to 1430 period has perforce been impressionistic. The difficulty of investigating military records that are unconcerned with counties of origin and which provide the names of only the upper layer of participants, reinforces how futile an exercise it would prove to attempt to quantify their levels of participation. Yet, in broad terms, the portrait painted above is one of widespread opportunity for military careerists to see action, if not in France, then in Scotland, Wales or Ireland, or indeed in Spain or on Crusade. These opportunities, needless to say, should be viewed with caution. Only a small proportion of any county community ever participated on individual expeditions. Furthermore, there were of course considerable periods of truce, especially from 1360 to 1369 and from 1388 to 1415.⁷⁶ Campaigns were anyway of relatively short duration and, until the commencement of the Normandy conquest in 1417, fighting was seasonal rather than continuous. Large-scale expeditions were also expensive to mount and were not conducted annually.⁷⁷ As such, apart from those semi-regular moments when a sizeable contingent crossed the Channel beneath a royal or ducal banner, most Englishmen remained at home, with full-time military participants left seeking employment where they could find it.

It has been estimated that in peacetime garrison duty was open to perhaps 2,000 soldiers, with some castles and towns drastically reducing their number of

⁷⁵ TNA, E101/40/33 mm. 1, 11.

⁷⁶ K. Fowler, 'Truces', *The Hundred Years War*, ed. K. Fowler (London, 1971), pp. 184-215.

⁷⁷ For the sporadic nature of military expeditions to France during the 1370s, see Sherborne, 'Indentured Retinues and English Expeditions to France, 1369-80', 718-46.

defenders during years of truce.⁷⁸ A few Norfolk soldiers are known to have been lucky enough to have acquired such positions. William Thweyt and John Lancaster were respectively deputy constable of Corfe Castle and keeper of Marck Castle at Calais, while Sir Robert Salle also held the captaincy of the latter.⁷⁹ Most would not have been so fortunate. Little wonder then that some of those desiring to live from the wages and profits of war should have sought employment as mercenaries under foreign princes.

The knightly elite, however, was particularly well suited to this intermittent style of warfare, for breaks in hostilities provided them with the opportunity to tend to their substantial estates and to keep a hand in the local political scene. In this light, impressive military records need to be placed in their broader context. For example, Robert Lord Morley served on at least ten identifiable military ventures - an admirable achievement and one respected by his contemporaries. Yet these were undertaken over a forty-five year period, reflecting the fact that he was far from a full-time soldier. As we shall see in the following section, there were numerous incentives for the baronage and gentry to participate in the wars of this epoch, but there were also compelling reasons to stay at home.

Despite this proviso, and patchy though surviving military records are, one of their key features is the recurrence of the same names receiving letters of protection or payment of lump sums as retinue captains. By these means, the military careers of many of Norfolk's greater gentry can be pieced together with considerable precision. Among the lesser gentry, the long careers of East Anglia's deponents before the Court of Chivalry reinforce this perception of continuity. Collectively, therefore, the impression one is left with is that a core of Norfolk's gentry, ranging across the full social spectrum, from some of the wealthiest landowners in the county, to mere lesser gentry, to landless younger sons, participated extensively in the wars of the later Middle Ages, often undertaking careers in arms that lasted decades and that saw them fighting alongside the sons and grandsons of the comrades of their youth. This section

⁷⁸ A. Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses: The Soldiers' Experience* (Stroud, 2005), p. 85.

⁷⁹ Ayton, 'William de Thweyt, Esquire', 731-8; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 549; Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses: The Soldiers' Experience*, p. 82.

has demonstrated *that* Norfolk's gentry served in the king's and other wars. One must now consider *why* they served.

Military Careerism: The Profits and Losses of War

Norfolk's gentry participated in war for a variety of reasons.⁸⁰ Foremost amongst these, especially for less substantial individuals, was the possibility of pecuniary advantage. Obligation and conscription continued to play their part in the construction of English armies, yet most soldiers could expect to obtain wages for their efforts. In theory at least a knight received 2s. per day, an ordinary man-at-arms 1s., and an archer 6d. Additionally, *regard*, a bonus of about 6d. per day, was paid as a lump sum to each captain to distribute amongst his troops.⁸¹ Despite this, the practical value of wages for the average man-at-arms remains a contentious issue.⁸² For poorer gentry, their two shillings a day might well have supplemented the peacetime incomes they derived from other sources, such as rents. Likewise, army encampment or garrison duty, except in unusually harsh circumstances, at least provided a soldier with daily victuals. On the other hand, rates of pay remained largely unchanged between 1350 and 1430, with the result that the net value of army wages declined. Beyond this, wages were often slow in arriving, and, given the heavy reliance of the Crown upon Parliament to keep their war efforts afloat, there would undoubtedly have been numerous occasions when arrears were not paid at all. Indeed the captain of a small company, who was yet to receive back payments from his commander, might find himself forced to delve into his own private resources in order

⁸⁰ The remainder of this chapter focuses purely upon the material benefits of military service. Social and political motivations and East Anglian martial culture will be examined in Chapters Six and Seven.

⁸¹ Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages*, pp. 84-97; Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses*, pp. 84-137. For detailed investigations of these issues, see H. J. Hewitt, *The Organisation of War under Edward III* (Manchester, 1966); R. A. Newhall, *Muster and Review* (Harvard, 1940).

⁸² D. Hay, 'The Division of the Spoils of War in Fourteenth-Century England', *TRHS*, 5th Series, iv (1954), 91-109; McFarlane, 'War, the Economy and Social Change', pp. 139-49; M. M. Postan, 'The Costs of the Hundred Years War', *Past and Present*, xxvii (1964), 34-53; C. T. Allmand, 'War and Profit in the Late Middle Ages', *History Today*, xv (1965), 762-9; A. R. Bridbury, 'The Hundred Years' War: Costs and Profits', *Trade, Government and Economy in Pre-Industrial England. Essays presented to F. J. Fisher*, ed. D. C. Coleman and A. H. John (London, 1976), pp. 80-95; J. W. Sherborne, 'The Cost of English Warfare with France in the Later Fourteenth Century', *BIHR*, i (1977), 135-50; Allmand, *Lancastrian Normandy*, pp. 69-80; Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses*, pp. 127-37.

to keep his small detachment together. For the knight or esquire, seeking to live from the wages and profits of warfare, these potentialities represented a poor return for the outlay they encountered in arming and equipping themselves for each campaign.⁸³ If the stamp of gentry prominent in the *Lovel v. Morley* and the *Grey v. Hastings* disputes formed the backbone of English armies, and large-scale remuneration from war was the preserve of the lucky few, then the average gentry soldier appeared in imminent danger of running at a loss every time he bore his sword in the king's name.

Amongst the army's lower reaches, even the acquisition of spoils might make little difference to a soldier's overall income. The Crown reserved for itself between one-third and one-half of each company's winnings, as well as any valuable prisoners captured. As such, there was every chance that the compensation received by the humble man-at-arms or rank-and-file soldier, who had seized the booty or who had taken the captive in question, might have been meagre.⁸⁴ For men with little to their name, military service was an especially risky business. A lesser gentry man-at-arms could be utterly ruined by the payment of a ransom that stretched his limited resources, while common soldiers were as likely to be despatched as taken prisoner, since they clearly were not worth ransoming. It is consequently unsurprising that some commoners found labouring in the fields a more fruitful source of long-term income than the potential bonanza of a military career. This would have been particularly true in Norfolk, since it was one of England's more agriculturally fertile counties. A labourer named Robert Archer, for instance, in the 1370s was purportedly leading six to eight of his fellows out into the countryside where they earned 6d per

⁸³ Even arming oneself for service within the British Isles could prove exceedingly expensive. Thomas Lord Bardolf purchased armour in London prior to undertaking Richard II's Irish expedition in 1399, then found himself, having seen little action, needing to hurry back home through the difficult terrain of Wales in order to make submission to Henry IV. M. J. Bennett, *Richard II and the Revolution of 1399* (Stroud, 1999), pp. 148, 162.

⁸⁴ Denys Hay concluded that captains received one-third of their followers' winnings and the commander in turn received a third of a third. More recently, Andrew Ayton has persuasively argued that the cut taken by captains and commanders varied to as much as a half of their men's winnings, depending upon whether horse restoration or double *regard* was in operation. Hay, 'The Division of the Spoils of War', 91-109; Ayton, *Knights and Warhorses*, pp. 127-37.

day and food for their labours.⁸⁵ This was the same wage with no threat to life or limb that Archer could have received by bearing a longbow in the king's name.

Financially-speaking the knightly elite faced similar decisions. Great county landowners could live comfortably from their estates, rents and offices, so while service abroad was an important fillip to their personal honour and prestige, to serve too regularly would have represented too significant a risk for most. Many of Norfolk's greater knights seemingly chose to serve just often enough to keep their chivalric reputations intact, without dedicating their entire careers to the art of war. A fine example of this type of service may be gleaned from the military record of the Norfolk banneret, Sir John Verdon. He was one of those knights memorialised on the Erpingham Window, suggesting that his deeds in arms were perhaps common knowledge in his native shire. Verdon saw his most intensive bout of military action under the earl of Northampton between 1336 and 1343, before serving under the Black Prince at Crécy in 1346. He died advanced in years in 1392.⁸⁶ Military participation was evidently very much a short-term activity of his youth, and indeed one finds other active warriors, like Sir William Kerdiston II and Sir John Norwich, giving up the soldier's life after the siege of Calais, just as middle age was fast approaching.⁸⁷

In light of all this, one might wonder why so many gentry, great and small, bothered pursuing a long-term military career. The answer in wholly fiscal terms seems to be that the majority of full-time soldiers, most of whom would have been lesser gentry or landless younger sons from wealthy families, learned how to get by, consistently finding ways to break even, occasionally showing a small profit margin. Relatively few subcontracts between greater gentry captains and their small bands of lesser- and sub-gentry followers survive from the period of the Hundred Years War. Those that have, however, reveal that there was plenty of scope for gentry soldiers to

⁸⁵ For the story surrounding Robert Archer, described for a different scholarly purpose, see Harding, *The Law Courts of Medieval England*, p. 175.

⁸⁶ TNA, E101/19/36 m. 5; C76/17 m. 36; CPR, 1334-8, p. 530; Ayton, 'The English Army at Crécy', p. 210; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, pp. 49-53.

⁸⁷ See above.

draw enough income to maintain themselves in arms.⁸⁸ In particular it has been shown that, apart from receiving their slice of their followers' plunder and ransoms, retinue captains at times paid their men below the crown rate and kept the residue for themselves. Along similar lines, a cunning captain could prepare indentures with his recruits that directly tied their receipt of pay to the lump sums offered by the magnate commander of the entire company. In this fashion, a knightly captain could share in the profits of his men, undercut their wages to enhance his own, but deflect the financial risks involved onto the great lord in overall command.

Moving one-step further down the ladder of obligation to those lesser-gentry career soldiers who often acted as subcontractors for knightly captains, it is plain that such men likewise developed methods of garnering short-term profits. The terms drawn up for the Brittany campaign of 1380, between Sir Hugh Hastings III and a certain Jankyn Nowell, provides a fine illustration of this. Most men-at-arms with whom Hastings indented agreed to serve with no more than two or three followers. Nowell provided nine men in total and contributed one-twelfth of Hastings' entire retinue.⁸⁹ This might seem a paltry contribution in the grander scheme of things, but Nowell was evidently perceived as a valuably ally by Hastings, who was prepared to pay top price for his services. The fact that a man who did not even style himself 'esquire', and who brought only a handful more men than everyone else in the retinue, could be significantly better paid than his fellow subcontractors suggests, as Anthony Goodman concluded, that Nowell was likely a professional soldier, with a solid military reputation at the parish level, who could draw friends, kin, tenants and associates to serve him in war, despite his relatively lowly social status. Nowell was not a Norfolk man and likely hailed from Lancashire.⁹⁰ As such one may suggest that Hastings was prepared to reward Nowell as handsomely as he did because the latter was furnishing his retinue with archers and foot soldiers from an area of the kingdom where Hastings' own influence was comparatively minimal. Working back in the opposite direction, the Northumbrian knight, Sir John Strother, recruited into his

⁸⁸ Goodman, 'The Military Subcontracts of Sir Hugh Hastings', 114-20; Walker, 'Profit and Loss', 100-6; Morgan, *War and Society in Medieval Cheshire*, pp. 150-5.

⁸⁹ Goodman, 'The Military Subcontracts of Sir Hugh Hastings', 116-17.

⁹⁰ Anthony Goodman originally suggested Nowell was a Norfolk man. In a more recent work, Goodman states that Nowell was actually probably from Lancashire. *Ibid.*; Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses: The Soldiers' Experience*, p. 257, n. 13.

retinue three East Anglian lesser gentry as subcontractors, including a Norfolk man named William Swanton.⁹¹ From these cases, one sees how intelligent career soldiers well understood their own value to company captains and adroitly sought the highest bidder. London provided something of a hub for such men. The knightly elite could begin building their retinues at home, utilising their tenants, neighbours and kinsmen.⁹² Their numbers could then be swelled in the capital, where an array of professional soldiers clustered between campaigning seasons, re-equipping themselves and enjoying a well-earned rest, before offering high priced, though good quality, service to greater men with retinue quotas to fill and money to spend on them.⁹³

One may reasonably assume that a significant proportion of the numerous lesser knights and esquires who spoke before the Court of Chivalry on behalf of Thomas Lord Morley were men of the Nowell type, obscure individuals, lesser, rather than greater, gentry.⁹⁴ The majority had fought under a variety of captains, including magnates with little or no landed interests in East Anglia.⁹⁵ Men whose military pedigrees encompassed participation in almost all the major expeditions of the high Edwardian age would have been well placed to act as swords for hire. If they were veterans of great battles, like Sluys, Crécy, Winchelsea or Poitiers, this would only have increased their asking price. This type of hand-to-mouth existence, relying upon contacts with one's fellows to construct a small company, together with a recognised reputation for deeds in arms, enabled the career soldier to remain in the saddle, taking

⁹¹ Walker, 'Profit and Loss', 100-6; *CCR*, 1374-7, p. 224; *CPR*, 1367-70, p. 10.

⁹² Nowell appeared to draw kinsmen into his retinue. TNA, E101/39/9. The Cheshire knight, Sir Ralph Mobberley, certainly did so. Morgan, *War and Society in Medieval Cheshire*, pp. 150-2. Along similar lines, Neil Jamieson has highlighted the importance of regional solidarities in the construction of English armies during the Lancastrian age. N. Jamieson, 'The Recruitment of Northerners for Service in English Armies in France. 1415-50', *Trade, Devotion and Governance: Papers in Later Medieval History*, ed. D. L. Clayton, R. G. Davies and P. McNiven (Stroud, 1994), pp. 102-15.

⁹³ Walker, 'Profit and Loss', 104.

⁹⁴ The esquire, John Raven, for example, who stated that he had served at Sluys, Crécy, Winchelsea and Rheims, is not listed in the pay accounts for these campaigns, nor did he take out letters of protection or attorney. As such, his impressive military career would have been lost to history had his Court of Chivalry deposition not survived. TNA, C47/6/1, no. 6. For the lesser 'parish' gentry, see Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages*, pp. 71-3.

⁹⁵ E.g. TNA, C47/6/1, nos. 4, 6, 14, 30, 34, 37, 38, 61.

his wages and *regard*, making occasional additional profit through plunder, and altogether doing just enough to re-equip himself for the following year's campaigning season.

Just as company captains relied upon experienced professional soldiers to help fill out their retinues, so the nobility, as we saw in the previous chapter, desired martially-inclined members of the county elite to serve as part of their nucleus of retainers and to appear at muster with a company of their own. Most of Norfolk's more militarily-active greater gentry, as we have seen, undertook their careers in arms in just this fashion: Sir Thomas Felton and Sir Stephen Hales with the Black Prince; Sir Thomas Erpingham and Sir Robert Berney with John of Gaunt; John Lancaster with Thomas Mowbray; Sir John Fastolf and Sir John Radcliffe with Thomas, duke of Clarence; and Sir William Phelip and Sir William Oldhall with Thomas Beaufort.⁹⁶ Men of this ilk, in particular, benefited from the receipt of fees and annuities, usually for their joint service in peace as well as war. Yet such rewards were sometimes overtly linked to military service alone. Sir Stephen Hales provides perhaps the finest example of this. His receipt of a substantial life annuity of 100 marks coincided with the Black Prince's retirement from the battlefield in ill health. Hales, as already mentioned, had fought in the Prince's company since 1353 and was a veteran of Poitiers, Rheims and Najéra. His exertions on his lord's behalf were quite clearly appreciated.⁹⁷

Similarly, although one lacks firm evidence of the rewards they received, long-serving warriors of lesser rank proved equally important figures in magnate retinues. The chance to serve a single lord was probably quite enticing for full-time soldiers. It provided them with ready-made employment and allowed them to escape the uncertain business of offering their services to all-comers and hoping to be taken. Certainly several of Thomas Lord Morley's lesser gentry testators before the Court of Chivalry seem to have found themselves a long-term noble commander. As we have seen, six men attested that they had fought regularly under a Morley in war,⁹⁸ four

⁹⁶ See Chapter Four.

⁹⁷ *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, i, p. 163; *CPR, 1377-81*, p. 413.

⁹⁸ TNA, C47/6/1, nos. 5, 10, 11, 20, 26, 59.

described themselves as military retainers of the Ufford earls of Suffolk,⁹⁹ and William Thweyt saw his five decades of war service principally under three members of the Ufford family, as well as their kinsman, Sir John Norwich.¹⁰⁰ As we have seen too, Hugh Curson fought for a hectic two-year period under Sir John Norwich, and Sir John Verdon served as a banneret under the earl of Northampton for eight years.¹⁰¹ Likewise, the power of the Lancastrian affinity was graphically on display in both the *Scrope v. Grosvenor* and the *Grey v. Hastings* Court of Chivalry cases. As already outlined, twelve men from the Norfolk-Suffolk area, mostly experienced soldiers with connections to John of Gaunt or Edward the Black Prince, spoke for the Scropes,¹⁰² while in *Grey v. Hastings*, the role of the Lancastrian affinity as a major recruiter of Norfolk gentry soldiers becomes even more apparent, since almost without exception Hastings' militarily-active testators had fought extensively under Gaunt in France, Scotland and Spain, between 1367 and 1388.¹⁰³

Wages and annuities naturally comprised the most regular source of income for the warrior gentry, yet the potential for plunder added immeasurably to the lure of a military career. For much of the Hundred Years War, English armies maintained the *chevauchée* as their foremost military tactic.¹⁰⁴ Since these raids involved the seizure of goods, as well as the despoliation of the land and its inhabitants, military service may well have appeared the most lucrative of enterprises for the budding knight or esquire, hearing of its glories and riches from the comfort of his family's Norfolk manor. After 1417, moreover, territorial acquisition became an added inducement, as knights and esquires took up administrative positions in conquered towns and garrisons, whilst setting about the defence of the *pays de conquête*.¹⁰⁵ As in any profession, however, it is always the high-flyers who receive the greatest attention. Late Plantagenet and Tudor antiquaries catalogued dozens of manors and small-scale

⁹⁹ Ibid., nos. 13, 39, 42, 92.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., no. 92.

¹⁰¹ See above.

¹⁰² *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, i, pp. 51, 56, 59, 60, 63, 67, 71, 163, 165.

¹⁰³ *PCM*, i, *passim*.

¹⁰⁴ C. J. Rogers, *War Cruel and Sharp: English Strategy Under Edward III, 1327-1360* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 5-9.

¹⁰⁵ Allmand, 'The Lancastrian Land Settlement in Normandy', 461-79; Massey, 'The Land Settlement in Lancastrian Normandy', pp. 76-96; Allmand, *Lancastrian Normandy*, p. 50-121.

castles apparently built from the spoils of war, while various professional soldiers became leading captains in their own right, having begun their careers as lowly men-at-arms, or even as archers.¹⁰⁶ To cite Norfolk's most famous example, Sir Robert Salle, cut down by the peasant mob during the revolt of 1381, had been born the son of a serf.¹⁰⁷ Early scholars devoured chroniclers' tales of riches seized on the field of battle, of prisoners captured and sold for considerable ransoms, and of men who received a sizeable money gift from their lord in recompense for an individual act of heroism.¹⁰⁸ Naturally enough, the military careers first studied by historians were those of outstandingly successful soldiers like Sir John Hawkwood,¹⁰⁹ Sir Robert Knolles,¹¹⁰ Sir Hugh Calveley,¹¹¹ Sir Thomas Dagworth¹¹² and Sir John Fastolf,¹¹³ whose collective experience suggested a world in which personal aggrandisement was everywhere evident, in an era in which the English were victorious and continental Europe ripe for the plucking. Such soldiers, of course, were undoubtedly exceptional in their good fortune. Yet one ought not ignore the psychological importance of their sporadic success stories. They showed what was possible, not what was probable. To the aspiring soldier, these rich pickings were the jackpot of their profession.

Indeed, despite the patchiness of direct evidence of battlefield profit, there are to be found intermittent examples of rapid aggrandisement amongst militarily-active East Anglians. Veterans of the battle of Poitiers, for instance, were well rewarded for their bravery. Sir Richard Illey was a knight bachelor and fee holder of Edward the Black Prince,¹¹⁴ and Sir Richard Plays, as we have seen, hailed from one of East Anglia's oldest knightly families.¹¹⁵ For their exertions at Poitiers, they received

¹⁰⁶ E.g. Worcester, *Itineraries*, pp. 47, 51. See also, J. Leland, *Itineraries*, ed. L. Toulmin-Smith (London, 1906).

¹⁰⁷ Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses: The Soldiers' Experience*, p. 82.

¹⁰⁸ E.g. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, pp. 30-4.

¹⁰⁹ E.g. F. Gaupp, 'The Condottiere John Hawkwood', *History*, xxiii (1939), 305-21.

¹¹⁰ J. C. Bridge, 'Two Cheshire Soldiers of Fortune: Sir Hugh Calveley and Sir Robert Knolles', *JCAS*, xiv (1908), 112-231.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² M. Jones, 'Edward III's Captains in Brittany', *England in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge, 1986), pp. 99-118.

¹¹³ McFarlane, 'The Investment of Sir John Fastolf's Profits of War', pp. 175-97.

¹¹⁴ *BPrege*, iv, pp. 603, 234; Hewitt, *Edward the Black Prince's Expedition*, p. 205.

¹¹⁵ *CP*, x, pp. 535-42.

respectively 100 and 250 marks from the Prince,¹¹⁶ while Plays was additionally granted 1,000 *écus d'or*.¹¹⁷ A single battle like this could yield immense rewards for individual soldiers. Even as late as 1424, Sir John Fastolf purportedly won himself 20,000 marks at the battle of Verneuil, while Fastolf's companions-in-arms, Sir John Clifton and Sir Henry Inglose, proved similarly successful in the following decade, judging from their requests for letters of safe conduct for their prisoners, so that the latter might return home in quest of their ransoms.¹¹⁸ Money was obviously not the only prize on offer. Sir Miles Stapelton, in the year of the battle of Maun, received a black *destrier* as a gift,¹¹⁹ Sir Thomas Felton was given "a pair of gauntlets of plate",¹²⁰ while in the longer term commanders sometimes left cups and clothing to favoured retainers upon their deaths.¹²¹ Grants of lands and offices too could provide well-worn soldiers with a substantial income. In Normandy, Sir John Fastolf, Sir John Radcliffe, Sir John Clifton, Sir Robert Harling and Sir William Oldhall all acquired garrison commands and landed estates.¹²²

Of course, military careerism was a lottery in which one was as likely to lose life or limb as to build a tidy nest-egg for the future. Yet, especially for the knightly elite, who were the inheritors of the proud martial traditions of their ancestors, to entirely avoid playing the game of war would have been a blight upon their personal and familial honour. This particular source of motivation will be discussed at length in the following chapters, but it serves to explain why prominent landowners, with no real need to acquire additional profit on the field of battle, nonetheless undertook military careers, in many cases at regular intervals and spread over multiple decades. Indeed some paid the highest price of all, several of Norfolk's most famous warriors dying on campaign. Sir Miles Stapelton perished from his wounds after the battle of

¹¹⁶ *BPrege*, iv, p. 289.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, iv, p. 388.

¹¹⁸ Oxford: Magdalen College, *FP* 69 m. 4; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1887), pp. 285, 324.

¹¹⁹ *BPrege*, iv, p. 70.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

¹²¹ See Chapter Four.

¹²² E.g. TNA, E364/749; 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1880), Appendix i, pp. 683, 696; *CCR*, 1435-41, pp. 416-17; 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1881), Appendix, p. 380; *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France during the reign of Henry VI*, ed. J. Stevenson (London, R.S., 1864), ii, ii, p. 412; Paris: BN, ms fr 25766/816, 26049/677 (as cited in Curry, 'Database'); Paris: BN, PO 2138 Oldhall 4 (as cited in Curry, 'Database').

Auray in 1364; Sir John Morley failed to return from the Black Prince's Iberian expedition in 1367; and Sir Robert Harling died at the siege of St. Denis in 1435.¹²³ Disease was perhaps an even more ruthless killer. Robert Lord Morley was claimed by an epidemic on the Rheims campaign in 1360, while a similar outbreak cut a swathe through John of Gaunt's Spanish forces, taking the lives of Sir Thomas Morieux and Sir Hugh Hastings III.¹²⁴ These are merely some of Norfolk's most well-known war casualties. Such men were naturally followed to the grave by a plethora of obscure men-at-arms, archers and foot soldiers who never got the opportunity to acquire a memorable military reputation.

Moreover, to continue living from the profits of warfare, one had to remain on the winning side, and given the uncertainties of campaigning and the ebbs and flows of English fortunes over the course of their wars with France, many a longstanding soldier would have found the maintenance of success a greater challenge than its initial acquisition. Sir Thomas Felton, after enjoying the fruits of Poitiers and Najéra and the good graces of the Black Prince, spent his final few years a French prisoner, attempting to raise an exorbitant ransom of 30,000 *livres*, before returning home in understandably depleted health to see out his remaining months.¹²⁵ Sir Ralph Shelton I, a triumphant participant at Crécy, got a taste of his own medicine at Poitiers when, although once again on the winning side, he fell into French hands.¹²⁶ Despite the glory of Najéra, Sir Hugh Hastings II found himself taken prisoner and ransomed

¹²³ *CP*, vii, p. 63; ix, p. 215; Oxford: Magdalen College, *FP* 72 m. 9; NRO, NCC Reg. Surflete, fo. 187v.

¹²⁴ *CIPM*, x, no. 634; S. K. Walker, 'John of Gaunt and his Retainers', pp. 245-6; *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, ii, p. 168. For details of the 1386-8 Castilian expeditions, see Russell, *English Intervention in Spain*, pp. 400-94.

¹²⁵ *The Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham (1376-1422)*, tr. D. Preest, Introduction and Notes J. G. Clark (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 47. Hereafter, *The Chronica Maiora*, tr. Preest; Morgan, 'Sir Thomas Felton', *ODNB*, xix, pp. 286-7. The hardships Felton endured in his final years are made clear by his wife Joan's various attempts to acquire royal assistance. Joan petitioned the king in 1378 in the hope that a French prisoner, the Count de St. Pol, might be exchanged for her captured husband. TNA, SC8/21/1018. Three years later, soon after Sir Thomas' death, Joan again petitioned the royal council, this time outlining the money owed to Sir Thomas by the Crown and begging assistance in settling Sir Thomas' debts. TNA, SC8/104/5168.

¹²⁶ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, v, pp. 263-6.

during the Spanish venture of 1366-7.¹²⁷ John Lancaster, during his period of garrison duty at Calais, appears also to have endured imprisonment, for the Exchequer recompensed the treasurer of Calais for the 50 *livres* expended in paying Lancaster's ransom.¹²⁸ In 1407 Edmund White petitioned the royal council, seeking permission to load up a ship full of his goods, which he intended to sell in order to pay his own ransom, adding that his brother, John, was acting as hostage while he raised the required sum.¹²⁹ Finally, even during the barnstorming 1420s, personal mishaps could occur. Sir John Knyvet and Sir Henry Inglose were captured by the French in the middle of the decade and forced to pay a ransom that may have heralded the onset of Knyvet's long-term financial troubles.¹³⁰

Indeed, beyond the potential catastrophe of capture, the simple fact was that the longer a soldier's career lasted, and the more wealth he accrued, the more he stood to lose each time he re-entered the fray. No better example of this may be found than in the belated misfortunes of Sir John Radcliffe and Sir John Fastolf. The former became a creditor to the Crown for the massive sum of £7,000; an undesirable position to be in, given the Crown's poor record in paying its debts. Fastolf similarly spent long hours before the *Parlement of Paris*, demanding land, expenses and ransoms that he felt were his due. Although both ended their days far wealthier than they had been at the outset of their careers in arms, they nonetheless felt themselves owed considerably more in back payments. Radcliffe's accounts upon his retirement suggest that, for his service in Aquitaine alone, he was still owed £11,815, while Fastolf had a bill against the government drafted during the final years of his life claiming £11,000 that he believed were his by right.¹³¹ Both Radcliffe and Fastolf were self-made career soldiers, but it was not only men reliant upon war gains who suffered misfortune. Thomas Lord Scales was one of the few peers who remained dedicated to the English cause in France to the bitter end. He lost all his treasure when

¹²⁷ J. Froissart, *Oeuvres*, ed. K. de Lettenhove (Brussels, 1867-77), vii, p. 179.

¹²⁸ *Issues of the Exchequer. Henry III to Henry VI*, ed. F. Devon (London, 1837), pp. 253-4.

¹²⁹ TNA, SC8/147/7312.

¹³⁰ Worcestre, *Itineraries*, p. 358.

¹³¹ *CCR, 1435-41*, pp. 416-17; *English Suits before the Parlement of Paris 1420-1436*, ed. C. T. Allmand and C. A. J. Armstrong (London, 1982), p. 264; *CPR, 1436-1441*, pp. 247, 542; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 159; McFarlane, 'The Investment of Sir John Fastolf's Profits of War', p. 177.

his fortress at Granville fell to the French in 1442, and further calamity awaited him in 1449-50 when he was captured and ransomed.¹³² The lure of a long-term military career, made all the more enticing by the early gains of the Normandy conquest, eventually saw Scales finish his three and a half decades in the saddle with little discernible profit to his name. Ten years later he was dead, murdered by pro-Yorkist Thames watermen for his loyalty to Henry VI.¹³³

Military service was always a risky business, yet overall its enticements were considerable. Wages and victuals provided a soldier with a living, while the potential for spoils and ransoms beckoned the young man dreaming of rapid self-aggrandisement. Associated with these material benefits was the prospect of establishing a recognised reputation in the world of chivalry, which would better enable a young warrior to acquire fees and annuities from great men who would never have courted him in civilian life. On the downside, every soldier faced death, maiming and capture on each occasion he took up arms. Large-scale reward was the preserve of the lucky few and there would have been countless soon-to-be wasted lives amongst the personnel on every campaign. Yet the profits of war, brought back home and lavishly spent, reinforced for the aspiring soldier that here was a lottery well worth winning. His motives might have varied, depending upon whether he was a major knightly landowner, lesser gentry, a landless younger son, or a *parvenu* seeking to raise himself into the ranks of the gentle. Regardless of individual purpose, however, it is clear that if war was a high-stakes game, most of Norfolk's armigerous gentry were prepared to play it at least occasionally.

Returning Soldiers and Norfolk Society

Military service not only enhanced the financial status of individual gentry, it simultaneously enabled many men to grow in esteem in the eyes of their county community. Wartime participation distinguished a gentleman from his civilian contemporaries. A martial reputation could win a lowly man-at-arms an introduction into polite society. Such men, moreover, were they even moderately successful, would have returned to their local manor, hundred or village with useful contacts

¹³² CPR, 1446-52, p. 470; A. J. Pollard, *John Talbot and the War in France, 1427-1453* (London, Royal Historical Society Study in History, xxxv, 1983), p. 120.

¹³³ A. J. Pollard, *The Wars of the Roses*, second edition (New York, 2001), p. 79.

amongst the knightly elite or the regional nobility that could be exploited at a later date. The registers of John of Gaunt and Edward the Black Prince indicate quite clearly that both lords continued to look after the veteran soldiers of their campaigns, obtaining at their request pardons, protections and indulgences, or simply clearing a path through the tangled bureaucratic web that so often ensnared lesser men seeking to bring their private business before the royal clerks at Westminster.¹³⁴ In more practical terms, any longstanding soldier would naturally have become reasonably proficient as an administrator and a leader of men, while for the less scrupulous among them, their sword arms made them ideally suited to act as a 'heavy', leaning upon their neighbours and associates on another's behalf.

Numerous military men sought occupations upon their return home that enabled them to utilise the skills they had acquired on battlefields and in army camps and garrisons. Such warriors, as has already been noted in a specifically county context, would have made perfect candidates to hold down offices in local administration, especially those where an element of defensive military preparation was part of the job description. Sir John Norwich was ordered to survey the defences of Norwich Castle in 1359.¹³⁵ Later John Reymes became constable of the castle.¹³⁶ Sir Richard Walkefare was appointed by the Black Prince as keeper of the chase at Castle Rising.¹³⁷ John Lancaster became keeper of Framlingham Castle.¹³⁸ Sir John White acted as bailiff at Gimingham and feodary of the duchy of Lancaster estates.¹³⁹ Beyond county borders, lordly patronage enabled Sir Thomas Felton to become chamberlain of Chester,¹⁴⁰ Sir Thomas Erpingham warden of the Cinque Ports and constable of Dover Castle,¹⁴¹ and Sir Robert Berney, Erpingham's deputy.¹⁴² Even a humble esquire, like the aforementioned William Thweyt, was able to find himself a post at Corfe Castle in Dorset.¹⁴³

¹³⁴ *JGReg, passim; BPrege, passim.*

¹³⁵ *CIM*, 1348-77, p. 137.

¹³⁶ Raimes, 'Reymes of Overstrand', 31.

¹³⁷ *BPrege*, iv, p. 470.

¹³⁸ *CPR*, 1405-8, p. 86.

¹³⁹ Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, i, p. 378.

¹⁴⁰ Morgan, 'Sir Thomas Felton', *ODNB*, ix, pp. 286-7.

¹⁴¹ *CPR*, 1408-13, p. 57.

¹⁴² *CCR*, 1399-1402, pp. 170-1.

¹⁴³ Ayton, 'William Thweyt, Esquire', 731-8.

Norfolk's warrior gentry certainly achieved a good many of these offices through the patronage of their wartime commanders. However it was not only largesse that saw these men enter the world of administration. The county too wished to utilise their leadership qualities. The sheriff, for instance, among his duties was supposed to arrest felons and call out the posse when required, so it was natural that at least some men of military experience, most notably Sir Thomas Morieux, Sir Edmund Thorpe, Sir Robert Berney, Oliver Groos and John Lancaster, obtained this office.¹⁴⁴ More generally, a knightly landowner's social rank often saw him serve in parliament in later life. Sir Stephen Hales, Sir Edmund Thorpe II, Sir Hamo Felton, Sir John White and Sir Robert Berney all sat on multiple occasions, and indeed sometimes the Crown deliberately sought soldiers as representatives in the hope that they would be more inclined to vote in favour of a generous subsidy prior to an intended campaign.¹⁴⁵ Although these men had powerful magnate affiliations, they were prestigious county figures in their own right, and Hales, White and Berney in particular had most certainly enhanced their local reputations through the deeds in arms of their youth.¹⁴⁶

Aside from these prestigious offices, duties that overtly involved some measure of defence provided the most regular employment for the warrior gentry. In 1380, for example, a band of men turned against several serjeants-at-arms who were attempting to requisition vessels and conscript sailors for royal service. After the serjeants had become trapped in a barn, they were rescued by Sir Stephen Hales who put their assailants to flight.¹⁴⁷ In June 1351, Robert, earl of Suffolk, Robert Lord Morley, John Lord Bardolf, Sir John Ufford and Sir Robert Erpingham were appointed keepers of all ports and sea shores in Norfolk.¹⁴⁸ In February 1360, while the royal army was in France, John Lord Bardolf was commissioned by the king and council to array further troops for service overseas and those who assisted him in this undertaking included a glittering assortment of war veterans of the 1330s and 1340s,

¹⁴⁴ *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87.

¹⁴⁵ See Chapter Three.

¹⁴⁶ *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, i, p. 163; TNA, C47/6/1, no. 65; *PCM*, i, pp. 474-6.

¹⁴⁷ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 268.

¹⁴⁸ *CPR, 1350-4*, p. 303.

among them Sir William Kerdiston II, Sir John Norwich, and Sir John Ufford.¹⁴⁹ During the truce years of the 1360s, active knights continued to play an important role as commissioners of array.¹⁵⁰ Sir Hamo Felton carried out this task in 1366, as did Sir Walter Mauny and Sir Edmund Thorpe the following year.¹⁵¹ In April 1377, with the French sacking England's eastern and southern shores, those commissioned to prepare Norfolk's defences comprised a variety of old and current soldiers, including William Lord Bardolf, Sir Robert Howard, Sir Hamo Felton, Sir Stephen Hales and Sir John Clifton.¹⁵² The same group of men were recalled to perform these duties again in 1379 and 1380, when further French attacks were feared.¹⁵³ Finally, amidst the panic of 1385-6, Norfolk's commissions of array comprised a veritable 'who's who' of the county's foremost military participants, headed by the Lords Scales and Morley, and buttressed by Sir John Clifton, Sir Robert Howard, Sir Edmund Thorpe, Sir Stephen Hales, Sir Ralph Shelton, Sir Thomas Erpingham and Sir Robert Berney.¹⁵⁴ Long years of successful war service thus gained Norfolk gentry the trust and patronage of the higher nobility, while their martial reputations enabled military men of all ranks (but especially the knightly elite) to carve out fine careers for themselves in domestic administration, particularly in those offices where the ability to lead men into combat was a necessary pre-requisite.

Quite apart from the prestige of soldiering and the domestic employment opportunities it provided, the improved financial status of the upwardly mobile warrior added real substance to his social pretensions. A natural first step when seeking to heighten one's status was to look and act the part. The topographical histories of William Worcester and later antiquarians illustrate the extent to which the career soldier sought to advertise his new-found prosperity.¹⁵⁵ Their accounts of small-scale castles, possessing splendid-looking palisades and surrounded by moats, strike the reader as representative of the vulgar ostentation typical of *nouveaux-riches*

¹⁴⁹ CPR, 1358-61, pp. 405, 415.

¹⁵⁰ See Chapter Three.

¹⁵¹ CPR, 1364-7, pp. 365, 431. For Mauny's career, see below.

¹⁵² CPR, 1374-7, p. 497.

¹⁵³ CPR, 1377-81, pp. 360, 472.

¹⁵⁴ CPR, 1381-5, p. 589.

¹⁵⁵ Worcestre, *Itineraries*, pp. 47, 51. For Tudor antiquarians, see especially, Leland, *Itineraries*.

in any era.¹⁵⁶ Additionally, the professional soldier, now that he had money to spend, would assuredly have dressed the part, and would have developed around himself an impressive household, dedicated to conspicuous consumption, all in an attempt to ape the lifestyle of the county elite, into whose world he was attempting to break.

Most importantly, such men would have sought to purchase and marry their way into the landowning elite. Direct evidence of war profits being put to this use simply does not survive and one cannot hope to chart the transfer of wealth accrued on campaign into the English land market. Yet circumstantial evidence strongly hints that Norfolk's career soldiers made the most of their spoils. Sir Stephen Hales for one consolidated his modest patrimony in the county;¹⁵⁷ Sir Nicholas Dagworth, most of whose estates were in Suffolk and Essex, purchased land, very likely from spoils obtained with the Free Companies, at Blickling in Norfolk, where he built himself a manor that became his principal residence;¹⁵⁸ and most famously, Sir John Fastolf constructed his impressive castle at Caister and set himself up as one of Norfolk's wealthiest landowners, with further properties in Norwich, London, and various other counties around the kingdom.¹⁵⁹

A variety of middling and lesser Norfolk gentry would in similar vein have advanced themselves to some degree within their native shire. Amongst the knightly elite, the profits and associations developed on campaign enabled many to purchase or inherit estates in other parts of the realm. Quite often their acquisitions followed the receipt of an office. Sir Thomas Felton's lands in the northwest were in large part a legacy of his friendship with the Black Prince, and several were tied to the administrative posts he held in the region.¹⁶⁰ More generally though, there was property a-plenty available on the land market for the warrior with newfound

¹⁵⁶ For Norfolk examples, see Chapters Three, Six and Seven.

¹⁵⁷ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, pp. 317-18, 325; vii, pp. 198, 200; ix, pp. 264, 397, 443; TNA, CP25(1)167/175/1600.

¹⁵⁸ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, v, p. 320, vi, pp. 384-5.

¹⁵⁹ McFarlane, 'The Investment of Sir John Fastolf's Profits of War', pp. 175-97; A. R. Smith, 'Aspects of the Career of Sir John Fastolf (1380-1459)' (D.Phil, Oxford, 1982); A. R. Smith, 'The Greatest Man of That Age': The Acquisition of Sir John Fastolf's East Anglian Estates', *Rulers and Ruled in Late Medieval England: Essays Presented to Gerald Harriss*, ed. R. E. Archer and S. K. Walker (London, 1995), pp. 137-53.

¹⁶⁰ *CIPM*, 1377-84, pp. 140-1.

purchasing power or a young wife with a substantial dowry. Sir William Elmham, through a combination of patronage, purchase and a good marriage, expanded his few holdings in Norfolk and Suffolk and acquired valuable properties in Buckinghamshire and Yorkshire,¹⁶¹ while Sir Thomas Gerbergh thrice made profitable marriages, inheriting property through his wives from the Geneys, Wachesams and, via the maternal line, from the Feltons of Litcham.¹⁶²

It was not only local soldiers who bought their way into Norfolk's elite. Norfolk was one of England's wealthiest shires and on the land market its fertile estates were amongst the most valuable in the realm. Additionally, its peaceable climes made it a perfect place to live out one's retirement, an option taken by several experienced warriors who hailed from less hospitable parts. Sir Miles Stapelton of Yorkshire¹⁶³ and Sir John Radcliffe of Lancashire,¹⁶⁴ as we have seen, each married their way into Norfolk society. Sir Robert Knolles, one of the fourteenth century's most outstanding career soldiers, established his principal seat at Sculthorpe in Norfolk, as well as acquiring residences in Kent and London.¹⁶⁵ Finally, as an example of patronage *par excellence*, Sir Walter Mauny, a Hainaulter who had entered England in the service of Queen Philippa, and who rapidly became one of Edward III's most trusted commanders, was rewarded with great swathes of territory in East Anglia and became the last of a string of husbands to Margaret of Brotherton, countess of Norfolk.¹⁶⁶ Additionally, of course, as we saw in Chapter Three, Norfolk's own knightly elite quite often made profitable marriages with the daughters or widows of their old wartime comrades, or with the offspring of celebrated lawyer-administrators, both within and beyond Norfolk's borders - matches which enhanced their landed wealth and buttressed their place in regional society.

¹⁶¹ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, p. 438; x, p. 305; *Feet of Fines for Norfolk*, ed. Rye, pp. 289-90, 295; W. A. Copinger, *The Manors of Suffolk* (London, 1905-11), iii, pp. 326-7; *CPR*, 1374-7, p. 296; *CCR*, 1381-5, p. 110; *CCR*, 1389-92, pp. 316, 318; *Feudal Aids*, v, p. 102.

¹⁶² See Chapter Three.

¹⁶³ *CP*, vii, pp. 61-2.

¹⁶⁴ C. P. Hampson, *The Book of the Radclyffes* (Edinburgh, 1940), *passim*.

¹⁶⁵ Bridge, 'Two Cheshire Soldiers of Fortune', 110-12.

¹⁶⁶ *CPR*, 1354-8, p. 325; *CIPM*, xiii, nos. 116-22.

Thus far, our portrait of the career soldier's path to success has been depicted as a comparatively smooth one. Any soldiers who developed long military records were naturally worthy of esteem, and, if lucky enough to accrue profit from their years in the saddle, they could return to England with material advantages that could facilitate their acceptance into regional high society. Yet this was not automatically the case. Indeed it is evident from the better-known post-war careers of Norfolk's soldiers that reintegration into their native county was not always easy. This was less of an issue for the established knightly elite. Great landowners, as their letters of protection and attorney highlight, served regularly, though intermittently, in the king's wars, coming home in the interim to tend to their estates and to participate in county office. For lesser gentry, or landless younger sons of all ranks, however, there was greater opportunity to serve near-continuously in war. As such, men like Sir Stephen Hales, Sir William Elmham and Sir Nicholas Dagworth rarely returned to their native East Anglia for years at a time and it may well have been difficult for these men to find their place in the civilian world of the county. Elmham and Dagworth developed into respected royal administrators and international diplomats during their later years, yet neither became very active as Norfolk office holders, although they certainly did not neglect their landed interests, nor their local contacts within the county.¹⁶⁷ Hales, by contrast, seems to have made a conscious effort to involve himself in shire office, acting as M.P. for Norfolk several times and sitting on a wide variety of judicial commissions.¹⁶⁸ Having left Norfolk in the early 1350s as a minor gentleman from Testerton, Hales had returned home with a 100-mark annuity, a knighthood and a martial reputation.¹⁶⁹ He therefore had to find a new role for himself within Norfolk, for there was certainly no going back to the provincial world from whence his family came.

The tenuous social position of the newly rich is perhaps most spectacularly revealed in the demise of Sir Robert Salle during the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. Having purportedly grown fat, literally and figuratively, from the spoils of war, he was beseeched by the gentlefolk and citizens of Norwich to parley with the mob

¹⁶⁷ Morgan, 'Sir Thomas Felton', *ODNB*, xix, pp. 286-7; TNA, C61/89 m. 6; E403/536 m. 20; C76/65 mm. 2, 4, 8; C76/66 m. 5.

¹⁶⁸ See Chapters Three and Four for details of Hales' administrative career.

¹⁶⁹ *CPR, 1377-81*, p. 413; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, pp. 267-9.

camped outside their walls, on the grounds that his military reputation would awe them and that as the son of a serf he spoke their language and they would heed his words. Yet when the rebels urged Salle to join them on the basis of common heritage, he flew into a rage, hurled insults at them, and charged into their ranks, only to be cut down by sheer weight of numbers and promptly lynched.¹⁷⁰ Salle's reaction suggests not merely a hot temper, but an overwhelming determination to disassociate himself from his peasant roots.

Beyond all of these examples, the clearest testament to the difficulties of reintegration for old soldiers may be found in the post-war career of Norfolk's most famous warrior, Sir John Fastolf. From Fastolf's well-documented experience, extreme though it undoubtedly was, it becomes plain that military success overseas did not guarantee recognition at home. It was naturally harder for military men after the Normandy invasion of 1417 to fit back into their county community. Many had carved out patrimonies of their own in France, and Fastolf was no exception. Such men had also been living a continuous warlike existence, manning garrisons and towns in what was, even in the *pays de conquête*, essentially enemy territory.¹⁷¹ By the time Fastolf retired from the fray in 1439, his French possessions were already in the process of being lost and what remained would disappear from his grasp in the ensuing decade and a half.¹⁷² Even so, he had returned to Norfolk as one of England's wealthiest knights, with a Garter stall and friends amongst the knightly elite, the baronage, and the higher nobility, who respected his martial prowess.¹⁷³ Consequently, when he began building his magnificent castle at Caister and setting himself up as one of the major landowners in Norfolk's northeast,¹⁷⁴ he would justifiably have expected to be accorded significant respect. He lived as might be considered typical of a wealthy and respected knight, with an array of household

¹⁷⁰ Froissart, *Oeuvres*, ed. Lettenhove, ix, pp. 407-9; *Chronicon Angliae*, ed. Thompson, pp. 172-3, 305; Knighton, *Chronicon*, ed. Lumby, ii, pp. 140-1.

¹⁷¹ Allmand, *Lancastrian Normandy*, pp. 50-80, 152-240.

¹⁷² McFarlane, 'The Investment of Sir John Fastolf's Profits of War', p. 177.

¹⁷³ Smith, 'Aspects of the Career of Sir John Fastolf', *passim*.

¹⁷⁴ Smith, "The Greatest Man of That Age", pp. 137-53.

attendants, an impressive library, and estates and town houses scattered throughout the realm.¹⁷⁵

Despite this, Fastolf appears never to have been truly accepted by Norfolk's gentry. A clique of friends, servants and associates developed around him near Caister, yet his cantankerous ways made him a burden to those close to him and made it difficult for him to establish amicable contacts within the county.¹⁷⁶ He additionally would have suffered from similar difficulties to those felt by Sir Stephen Hales. He had departed for Ireland after the usurpation as the young son of a prosperous knightly family with strong connections to Yarmouth, and had returned four decades later as a Garter Knight with a chivalrous reputation.¹⁷⁷ Like many-a successful soldier with disposable income he sought to buy his way into the land market. A return to the world of his youth evidently held little attraction for him. His cause though was undermined not so much by his roots, but rather by the indiscriminate nature of his spending sprees from the 1430s onwards. During his final years in France, evidently with an eye towards his retirement, Fastolf had instructed his clerks to purchase a variety of properties on his behalf. Unfortunately, as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven, several of these had contested titles, meaning that Fastolf found himself with rivals and enemies even before returning home. Several of these men, moreover, were intimately connected with William, earl of Suffolk, and Fastolf, despite all that he had achieved in the world of chivalry, proved wholly unsuccessful when he sought to take on the earl's coterie.

Put simply, the events of the last twenty years of his life illustrated quite plainly that Fastolf's influence in East Anglia matched neither his martial reputation, nor his bluster.¹⁷⁸ It must have been frustrating and disheartening for him that, after

¹⁷⁵ Hughes, 'Stephen Scrope and the Circle of Sir John Fastolf', pp. 109-46. See also Chapter Seven.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Fastolf's most substantial relative during his childhood had been his uncle, Sir Hugh Fastolf, who sat as sheriff and M.P. for Norfolk, was a dominant figure in Yarmouth politics, was one of the wealthiest merchants of his generation, and lent considerable sums of money to the Crown during the turbulent 1370s and 1380s. *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, pp. 56-9.

¹⁷⁸ Smith, 'Aspects of the Career of Sir John Fastolf', chs. 4 and 5; A. R. Smith, 'Litigation and Politics: Sir John Fastolf's Defence of his English Property', *Property*

years of respect amongst his wartime comrades, there was no real place for him in his native Norfolk. To many of the greater gentry, he may have been perceived as an interloper, someone who had not been seen for decades and who was now positioning himself at the forefront of a county community with which he was wholly out of touch. No wonder then that Fastolf dedicated his final few years to seeking redress for his financial losses in France. Norfolk had little to offer him and, beyond his old knightly war comrades, and his small circle of friends in the county's northeast, he had largely found himself greeted with jealousy and resentment by the men of his county.

Conclusion

The opportunities to serve in war during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries were thus numerous. A variety of soldiers of all ranks carved out successful careers in arms, living from the wages and spoils of warfare. On campaign too, useful contacts could be made, enabling the successful warrior to obtain the patronage of greater men and potentially acquire gifts, grants, annuities and protection from a grateful commander. Indirectly, these associations, combined with the prestige attached to soldiering, opened the way for long-serving military men to re-enter their local county community. Their experience as administrators and leaders of men made them ideally suited to act as sheriffs, M.P.s, judicial commissioners, defenders of the coast, commissioners of array and constables of castles. The return of gentry, who were long absent and who were in some cases far wealthier and more influential than when they had departed, did not always make for easy relations with their fellow gentry. Yet rewards on this sort of scale were indisputably enjoyed only by the lucky few, with the result that most men were sufficiently unaltered in status upon their retirements from the fray that the equilibrium of county society was not particularly upset by their return.

Despite the obvious practical limitations of profit, those occasional success stories where rapid self-aggrandisement occurred were widely known and were memorialised by chroniclers and by word-of-mouth. For the young knight, therefore,

and Politics (Gloucester, 1984), pp. 63-8; Richmond, *The Paston Family: The First Phase*, pp. 229-40; Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 144-55.

the cultural mores of chivalry that inspired men to seek a martial reputation were accompanied by the possibility of substantial personal gain, something that men like Elmham, Dagworth, Salle and Fastolf showed was within the grasp of the would-be warrior. In this chapter we have investigated the material enticements that encouraged men to fight in the king's wars. In Chapter Six, we will turn to an examination of the region's 'military community' as a social and cultural organism, a key ingredient of which was the chivalric ethos that in some measure compelled the warrior gentry to live up to personal and popular expectation by undertaking military service at least occasionally.

THE MILITARY COMMUNITY

Philip Morgan, in his detailed study of Cheshire military society, defined the personnel of its 'military community' as "those (in local society) with military experience",¹ and this provides a perfectly suitable working definition for the Norfolk situation as well.² However, extensive military participation in the king's wars, or even shared experiences on the same campaigns, does not in itself imply that there prevailed in Norfolk a collective sense of community amongst the warrior gentry. After all, most of the armigerous elite's closest ties at the county level, as we have seen, were forged with their immediate neighbours, with their numerous kin, and with their lesser and sub-gentry tenants and attendants. Those called upon to act as feoffees, witnesses and attorneys for great knights were sometimes fellow soldiers, but were just as often lawyers, bureaucrats, clergymen, or assorted neighbours, and it is clear that the warrior elite's networks of friends and associates were varied and wide-ranging in their composition, encompassing civilian as well as military gentry. Consequently, although these types of local networks hint impressionistically that mutual military service enabled some clusters of knights and esquires to form lifelong attachments, such evidence alone does not suggest that there prevailed broader solidarities amongst Norfolk's militarily-active gentry that might lead one to speak of a 'military community' in the region.

What will be suggested in this chapter is that a common adherence to the values of chivalry, popularised on the back of the military victories of the high Edwardian period and combined with the natural localism of the age, enabled just such a sense of regional solidarity to flourish. Various examples of friendships formed on campaign, or actions imbued with a chivalric flavour, indicate that those relationships forged between Norfolk's armigerous elite were not necessarily just one of many ties that loosely paralleled their concomitant links with civilian gentry. That Norfolk knights, like their counterparts throughout the realm, took their personal

¹ Morgan, *War and Society in Medieval Cheshire*, p. 1.

² Andrew Ayton has very recently tackled the issue of military communities in a dedicatory volume to Maurice Keen. The article, however, appeared too late to be incorporated into this thesis.

honour seriously, behaved chivalrously in war, and formed lasting friendships on national military expeditions, is not in doubt. Sir John Fastolf, when accepted into the Order of the Garter, organised for his close Norfolk companion-in-arms, Sir Henry Inglose, who was at this stage back in England, to act as his proxy at his installation.³ Sir William Elmham, when constructing the army for Bishop Despenser's crusade to Flanders in 1383, cajoled a number of his old wartime comrades - several East Anglians, and some from farther afield - to join him.⁴ Perhaps most startlingly, a snippet of trivia preserved in William Worcester's *Itineraries* reveals East Anglian solidarities in action across the Channel. During the siege of Rouen in 1419, seven East Anglian knights lodged together with Sir William Bowet, described by Worcester as "le logeyng felowys" (his room mates). These seven were the young Thomas Lord Morley, Sir John and Sir Robert Clifton, Sir William Oldhall, Sir Henry Inglose, Sir John Knyvet and Sir Philip Braunche.⁵ That a cluster of East Anglia's foremost knights should lodge together during the siege says much for the importance of local contacts and pre-existing friendships on those occasions when men from all over the realm were thrust together, in perilous conditions, on a national military enterprise.

The principal question addressed below is whether the solidarities evidently shared by individual military companions, or small groups of knights and esquires from the shire, may actually be indicative of a broader-based sense of 'military community' amongst the county's warrior elite in general. It will be posited that such a sense of community did indeed exist and that it was essentially a social and cultural community of shared interests, experiences, and attitudes, held together by a collective adherence to the values of chivalry.⁶ It was never a community that took

³ *Register of the Garter*, printed by J. Barber (London, 1724), ii, pp. 132.

⁴ Magee, 'Sir William Elmham', 181-90.

⁵ Worcester, *Itineraries*, pp. 360-1.

⁶ The leading modern scholar of chivalry, Maurice Keen, defines the term as "an ethos in which martial, aristocratic and Christian elements were fused together", but warns that it "is a word that was used in the middle ages with different meanings and shades of meanings by different writers and in different contexts". Keen, *Chivalry*, pp. 16, 4. Keen has perceived a vibrant connection between the ideals of chivalry and its practical application and what follows adopts this perspective. Richard W. Kaeuper has utilised these ideas from a variety of perspectives when examining the role played by the chivalric ethos in shaping medieval attitudes towards war, violence, justice, and the state. R. W. Kaeuper, *War, Justice, and Public Order: England and France in*

concrete form or possessed official members. Moreover, this ‘military community’ was East Anglian in scope and paid no heed to crown-designated county borders, especially those between Norfolk and Suffolk. The classic virtues of a good knight - habitually outlined by writers of romance, and reinforced by chroniclers and authors of chivalric manuals - were that he should possess *prouesse*, *loyauté*, *largesse*, *courtoisie*, and *franchise*. He should defend the poor and the oppressed and, a point regularly stressed by ecclesiastical authorities, he should act as a bastion of the Church and a protector of Christianity against the heathen.⁷ This chapter will take this code of values and see how well it applies to East Anglia’s warrior gentry, not so much in order to demonstrate that these knights and esquires were chivalrous, but rather to suggest that it was their chivalrous mentality, combined with a sense of regional pride, that united them into a loosely defined East Anglian ‘military community’.

East Anglia’s ‘Military Community’: The National Context

Before homing in on Norfolk’s regional situation, it is necessary first to consider the wider role of chivalry as a source of cohesion amongst England’s armigerous elite, and, more broadly still, amongst the aristocracy of Christian Europe.

the Later Middle Ages (Oxford, 1988), esp. pp. 186-90. Other scholars have argued, in contrast, that chivalry was never more than an ideal, to which knights never practically aspired, and even that chivalry in the later Middle Ages was in decline, becoming increasingly focused upon pageantry and literature and simultaneously detached from the harsh realities of warfare. For the latter view, see J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought, and Art in France and the Netherlands in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, tr. F. Hopman (Harmondsworth, 1972); R. L. Kilgour, *The Decline of Chivalry As Shown in the French Literature of the Late Middle Ages* (Harvard, 1937); A. B. Ferguson, *The Indian Summer of English Chivalry: Studies in the Decline and Transformation of Chivalric Idealism* (London, 1960); J. Barnie, *War in Medieval English Society: Social Values and the Hundred Years War 1337-99* (New York, 1974). For a subtle interpretation along similar lines, see M. G. A. Vale, *War and Chivalry: Warfare and Aristocratic Culture in England, France and Burgundy at the End of the Middle Ages* (London, 1981). Keen challenges the above view in Keen, ‘Chivalrous Culture in Fourteenth-Century England’, 1-24; M. H. Keen, ‘Huizinga, Kilgour and the Decline of Chivalry’, *Medievalia et Humanistica*, new series, viii (1977), 1-20. For more recent discussions of late medieval chivalry, see K. Stevenson, *Chivalry and Knighthood in Scotland 1424-1513* (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 1-12; D. Grummitt, *The Calais Garrison: War and Military Service in England, 1436-1558* (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 92-118.

⁷ Keen, *Chivalry*, pp. 2, 16.

It is obviously the case that gentry soldiers from all over England shared the same broad experiences in the Hundred Years War, and possessed similar pride in their arms, and in their own and their ancestors' deeds on the battlefield. This section, therefore, will emphasise the importance of chivalric culture and common upbringing to the entire English gentry, making clear that the chivalric sentiments expressed by East Anglians (and outlined in the following two sections) were merely part of a wider cultural phenomenon that was national in scope.

Beyond the confines of individual counties, the war with France played a vital role in engendering a certain national spirit within English military society. The enthusiasm of the higher nobility and the greater gentry for the war, combined with intelligent royal propaganda melding together the cause of Crown and people, meant that the English gentry *en masse* were thoroughly behind their sovereign.⁸ English armies in this era were, of course, recruited on a nationwide scale, even though many of the smaller retinues largely comprised personnel from particular regions.⁹ As such, gentry from all over the realm could point proudly to their presence at Crécy, Poitiers or Agincourt, and these victories rapidly became sources of national pride that transcended county parochialism. Moreover, long-serving soldiers, especially knightly captains in magnate retinues, would have been afforded the opportunity to get to know their counterparts from other parts of the kingdom, whom they would never have known so intimately had they not fought together on foreign soil.

Nowhere perhaps is an example of shared military experience and collective memory more apparent than amongst veterans of the Rheims campaign of 1359-60. Compared with Crécy and Poitiers, Rheims was militarily unsuccessful, tactically limited, and marked by no noteworthy battles.¹⁰ Yet, prior to his departure, Edward III mustered one of the largest field armies assembled during the Middle Ages, comprising 10,000 men, at least 700 of whom were gentry men-at-arms.¹¹ On 12 April 1360, King Edward arrayed his forces before the gates of Paris, glittering in their armour, their swords at the ready, and attempted to challenge the French to

⁸ Allmand, *The Hundred Years War*, pp. 136-50.

⁹ See Chapter Five.

¹⁰ Rogers, *War Cruel and Sharp*, pp. 385-422.

¹¹ TNA, E101/393/11, ff. 79-16v.

combat.¹² His invitation was declined and Edward eventually returned home dissatisfied. This fruitless piece of posturing, however, quite clearly struck a chord amongst those who had been present. Forty-one of Thomas Lord Morley's witnesses before the Court of Chivalry, as well as testators in the earlier *Scrope v. Grosvenor* case, fondly recalled this specific event.¹³ Indeed, most of Morley's deponents in their testimony described the Rheims campaign as the occasion when the king stood before the gates of Paris, or words to that effect.¹⁴ This highlights the fact that 10,000 men (and for our purposes, 700 gentry), drawn from all parts of England, could recall the day they had flanked their king while he challenged the French to battle. It was this type of shared memory - which surely would have been replicated many times over on a smaller scale throughout the generations - that gave the English war effort a nationalistic tinge and made it more than a mere dynastic squabble. East Anglian soldiers, as we shall see, possessed a strong sense of regional pride and solidarity, but these gentry were always part of a wider, national military community that collectively comprised the personnel of English armies during this epoch.

Moreover, the core ideals of chivalrous behaviour were naturally values held dear by the aristocracy of Christian Europe as a whole, so in this sense Norfolk knights and esquires were part of an international military fraternity as well. As chroniclers like Froissart, Monstrelet and Chastellain vehemently attested, a knight's good name rested upon his ability to behave courageously and honourably in times of war, and such commentators revelled in describing "the noble enterprises, conquests, feats of arms and heroism" of their generation.¹⁵ Whilst undertaking these activities, there was strong social pressure brought to bear on the knightly elite to adhere to the Laws of War, which provided an international blueprint that governed the actions of the warrior aristocracy in wartime and limited excesses of slaughter among their own number, by affording knights the opportunity to surrender to their opposing brethren

¹² *The Anonimale Chronicle*, ed. Galbraith, p. 46; *Scalacronica. The reigns of Edward I, Edward II and Edward III as recorded by Sir Thomas Gray*, ed. and tr. Sir H. Maxwell (Glasgow, 1907), pp. 156-7. Hereafter, Gray, *Scalacronica*.

¹³ TNA, C47/6/1; *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, i, pp. 240-1.

¹⁴ TNA, C47/6/1.

¹⁵ Keen, 'Huizinga, Kilgour and the Decline of Chivalry', 2-3.

and pay a ransom, rather than lose their life.¹⁶ Tournaments and crusading ventures reinforced the broad unity felt by Christian Europe's armigerous elite. The former often took on an international tone, even if that tone was at times nationalistic. In 1341, Henry of Grosmont and three of his household knights jousted against an equal number of Scots, with the latter coming off second best.¹⁷ In 1352, there occurred the infamous Combat of the Thirty, between equal numbers of Englishmen and Bretons.¹⁸ During the earl of Buckingham's Brittany campaign in 1380, knights from both armies issued jousting challenges to one another.¹⁹ In 1390, the jousts of St Inglevert near Calais witnessed three French knights taking on a series of English challengers, while a tournament held at Smithfield later that year saw the participation of numerous knights from France, the Low Countries and the German states.²⁰ The prominence accorded the tournament in romance literature, and the reverence with which contemporary chroniclers described its finest exponents, strongly imply that despite such national rivalries, a talented knight who carried all before him on the day would not be begrudged his victory and would win acclaim for it.

The renown achieved by knights like Henry of Grosmont, Jean de Boucicaut and Jacques de Lailang, and the respect such men quite clearly received at foreign courts, reminds one just how international was the order of knighthood and just how seriously the values of chivalry were taken by its exponents.²¹ Indeed foreign princes of good renown were made members of the Order of the Garter, while prominent

¹⁶ E.g. Froissart was outraged by the Black Prince's brutal sacking of Limoges in 1369, which he felt contravened the Laws of War, although technically, if Froissart's account is accurate, the Black Prince could have been completely justified in his actions. Froissart, *Oeuvres*, ed. Lettenhove, viii, p. 41f. For a detailed analysis of expected behaviour in wartime, see M. H. Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London, 1965). Various examples of chivalrous conduct on the battlefield are cited in Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages*, pp. 231-43.

¹⁷ Knighton, *Chronicon*, ed. Lumby, ii, p. 23; Andrew of Wyntoun, *Chronicle*, ed. F. J. Amours (Edinburgh, Scottish Text Society, 1914), vi, pp. 103-9.

¹⁸ H. R. Brush, 'La Bataille de Trente Anglais et de Trente Bretons', *Modern Philology*, ix (1912), 511-44.

¹⁹ Froissart, *Oeuvres*, ed. Lettenhove, ix, pp. 275-7, 281, 323-30.

²⁰ Ibid., xiv, pp. 55-7, 106-47; *Chroniques du religieux de Saint-Denys*, ed. M. L. Bellaguet (Paris, 1839), i, pp. 672-82.

²¹ Fowler, *Henry of Grosmont*, pp. 136-7; Keen, 'Huizinga, Kilgour and the Decline of Chivalry', 15; Keen, *Chivalry*, p. 171

English nobles were similarly invested into overseas chivalrous orders.²² Moreover, beyond such grandiose occasions as feasts and tournaments, the Crusade - the most honourable enterprise any Christian knight could undertake - on occasion united warriors from all over Europe in the one cause (although fierce national rivalries at times unduly drew the participants' attention away from the task at hand).²³ Boucicaut had served at Nicopolis in 1396, where a French army had been slaughtered by the Turks, while Grosmont in 1344 had been present at the siege of Alexandria.²⁴ Henry of Bolingbroke undertook crusading expeditions to the East in 1390 and 1392, gaining a chivalrous reputation and impressing the Teutonic Order in whose company he participated.²⁵ As a final example with a Norfolk flavour, Bolingbroke's rival, Thomas Mowbray, went to great lengths to gain access to the bones of his father, who had been slain by the Saracens whilst on crusade in 1368. Mowbray's father's remains were ceremoniously handed over in a jar at the Dominican convent in Galata, after which Mowbray had the remains interred in the Carmelite house in Fleet Street, London.²⁶ What is clear from these examples is that the chivalrous behaviour displayed by East Anglian knights and esquires (and which will be investigated below) reflected the same values as those held dear by English men-at-arms and nobles from all parts of the realm, and indeed these, at their core, were likewise the same as the values of the knightly elite of Christian Europe generally.

What held England's warrior elite (of which Norfolk's militarily-active gentry was a part) together in practice, and separated them from commoners and many civilian gentry, was their knowledge of the French language and their mutual schooling in arms. French was the distinguishing feature of the ruling elite, at both the national and regional level, and it was importantly "the linguistic link with western Christendom".²⁷ At least until the second half of the fourteenth century the knightly

²² Collins, *The Order of the Garter*, pp. 289-95; Keen, *Chivalry*, pp. 179-99.

²³ Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, pp. 259-323.

²⁴ Keen, 'Huizinga, Kilgour and the Decline of Chivalry', 15; Fowler, *Henry of Grosmont*, pp. 45-7.

²⁵ *Expeditions to Prussia*, ed. Toulmin-Smith; F. R. H. Du Boulay, 'Henry of Derby's Expeditions to Prussia, 1390-1 and 1392', *The Reign of Richard II*, ed. F. R. H. Du Boulay and C. M. Barron (London, 1971), pp. 153-72.

²⁶ Goodman, *John of Gaunt*, p. 163.

²⁷ N. Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy 1066-1530* (London, 1984), p. 122.

elite would have grown up speaking both English and French. Obviously the French spoken in England had over the centuries become contaminated with English vocabulary. As early as the twelfth century, there had been recognised 'bad French' in England, which Walter Map described as "Marlborough French".²⁸ Nonetheless, anyone born into armigerous society would have been expected to master both languages, and *parvenus*, as well as those on the fringe of the gentle, would have understood that knowledge of French was an essential stepping-stone on their path towards upward mobility. French, after all, remained the language of the law courts, and, despite the rise of the English vernacular from the later fourteenth century, was used - at least until the 1430s and 1440s - for writing letters, dictating wills, drawing up marriage contracts, and the like.²⁹

The gradual rise of the English vernacular during the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and the apparent decline of French as a taught language in grammar schools,³⁰ would appear at first glance to undercut the importance of French during the 1350 to 1430 period. In fact it reinforced the language as being distinctively that of the genteel warrior. Fewer clerks and clergy would have spoken and written in French by the close of this era, but it was still prominent within armigerous society. During the early fourteenth century, Robert of Gloucester and Ranulf Higden had stressed that French was the language of a gentleman,³¹ and although vernacular literature blossomed from the pens of Chaucer, Langland, Gower and others, knightly authors like Sir Thomas Grey of Heton and, at a more exalted level, Henry of Grosmont, continued to use French as their medium.³² Both the *Lovel*

²⁸ Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, tr. M. R. James (London, Cymmrodorion Record Series, ix, 1923), p. 271.

²⁹ H. Suggett, 'The Use of French in the Middle Ages', *TRHS*, fourth series, xxviii (1946), pp. 67, 70, 72, 79; see more recently, W. M. Ormrod, 'The Use of English: Language, Law and Political Culture in Fourteenth-Century England', *Speculum*, lxxviii (2003), 750-87.

³⁰ *Fourteenth-Century Verse and Prose*, ed. K. Sisam, [reprinted 1955] (Cambridge, 1921), p. 149; M. G. A. Vale, 'Language, Politics and Society: The Uses of the Vernacular in the Later Middle Ages', *EHR*, cxx (2005), 15-34.

³¹ *The Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. W. A. Wright (London, R.S., 1887), ii, pp. 543-4; *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden*, ed. C. Babington (London, R.S., 1869), ii, pp. 158-61.

³² A. I. Doyle, 'English Books In and Out of Court from Edward III to Henry VII', *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. V. J. Scattergood and J. W. Sherborne (London, 1983), pp. 163-81; Gray, *Scalacronica*; Henry of Grosmont, *Le*

v. *Morley* and the *Grey v. Hastings* Court of Chivalry disputes were recorded in French. This is not particularly surprising. French was always the language of heraldry and these were, after all, heraldic disputes. Similarly, when Sir Thomas Erpingham patronised his window in the Austin Friary in Norwich in 1419, the inscription placed upon it was in French, reinforcing this correlation between the knightly class and the French language.

Indeed, as the fifteenth century wore on, French remained a spoken language amongst the knightly elite. We know that the royal family retained a working knowledge of it, and it continued to be used as the language of international diplomacy.³³ Numerous gentry men-at-arms would have improved their French markedly during their tenure across the Channel - a process that would have reached its height in the Lancastrian age, with the militarily-active gentry living and fighting continuously in France, while their civilian counterparts remained at home in England. Sir John Fastolf and Sir John Radcliffe probably learnt much of their French during their years abroad, and Philippe de Commynes noted that John Lord Howard, the future duke of Norfolk, spoke French on diplomatic business in France in 1475.³⁴ Moreover, romances and *chansons de geste* remained the genre most readily composed in French, and this continued to be true deep into the fifteenth century, at which time such works were owned by Sir John Fastolf, John Lord Howard, and Sir John Paston II, to name but three Norfolk book collectors.³⁵

Going hand in hand with this knowledge of French, England's knightly elite were obviously also united by their training in arms from a young age. Contemporary authors focused upon the importance of military training to prepare boys for future careers in the saddle. Most agreed that from early adolescence, aristocratic boys

Livre de Seyntz Medicines, ed. E. J. F. Arnold (Anglo-Norman Texts II, Oxford, 1940).

³³ Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, pp. 122-3, 126-7.

³⁴ Philippe de Commynes, *Memoirs*, tr. M. C. E. Jones (Harmondsworth, 1972), pp. 260, 263.

³⁵ R. F. Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1980), pp. 8, 129, 136, 145, 153; G. A. Lester, *Sir John Paston's Grete Boke: A Descriptive Catalogue, with an Introduction, of British Library MS Lansdowne 285* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 7-12.

should immerse themselves in these activities.³⁶ The *Epitome Rei Militaris* of Renatus Vegetius, a classical scholar who wrote his work for the benefit of the Roman army in the fourth century AD, was the standard manual on all things military during the Middle Ages.³⁷ Sir John Fastolf and Sir John Paston II owned copies of Vegetius, as did numerous members of the aristocracy in England and beyond.³⁸ Although Vegetius' book is long and wide-ranging, the sections on military education stress the teaching from puberty of physical fitness, strength, agility, horsemanship, and proficiency with sword, spear, and bow.³⁹ Children could be taught to ride from an even earlier age, and we know that Edward I's second son, Henry, was given a horse at the age of seven, while John and Humphrey, the younger sons of Henry IV, were presented with steeds at the ages of ten and twelve respectively.⁴⁰ Henry V owned a sword at the age of nine, and Henry VI possessed eight of them at the same age.⁴¹

Even before this, parents, guardians, nurses and tutors were encouraged to relate tales of chivalry and heroic derring-do to aristocratic children from their earliest days. Indeed the rules laid down for the education of the future Edward V, written when he was three, emphasised that he should be introduced to such stories as soon as possible.⁴² It is well known too that to facilitate their preparation for the knightly lifestyle, aristocratic children would often be sent away from home to live in the households of more exalted families. John Paston I, for example, sent his eldest son, John II, to court in 1461, in the hope that he might gain a position in the royal household; a decision which bore fruit, for the younger John was travelling in the

³⁶ Giles of Rome, *Li Livres du Gouvernement des Rois*, ed. S. P. Molenaer, tr. H. Gauchy (London, 1899), pp. 216-23, 375-7; Christine de Pisa, *The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye*, ed. A. T. P. Byles, tr. W. Caxton (London, EETS, Original Series, cviii, 1932), p. 29. Aristotle's views on childhood education were also influential. Aristotle, *The Politics*, tr. B. Jowett (Oxford, 1905), book vii, chapter xvii, book viii, chapter iv.

³⁷ Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, p. 185; Prof. Christopher Allmand is currently undertaking a major study of medieval manuscripts of Vegetius.

³⁸ Ibid, pp. 185-7; Oxford, Magdalen College, *FP* 43, f. 10; Lester, *Sir John Paston's Grete Boke*, p. 7.

³⁹ Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, pp. 187-8.

⁴⁰ H. Johnstone, 'The Wardrobe and Household of Henry, son of Edward I', *BJRL*, vii (1922-3), 397, 408; J. H. Wylie, *History of England under Henry the Fourth* (London, 1884-98), iv, p. 219.

⁴¹ C. L. Kingsford, *Henry V*, second edition (London, 1923), pp. 14-15; Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, p. 184.

⁴² N. Orme, 'The Education of Edward V', *BIHR*, lvii (1984), 119-30.

king's company by the following March.⁴³ From the opposite perspective, Henry of Grosmont, armed with his international reputation as a chivalrous knight, was reputed to have accepted aristocratic children into his household from as far away as France and Spain.⁴⁴ By their late teens at any rate, many young English gentry, recently schooled in arms, were already serving on overseas campaigns. Several deponents who spoke for Thomas Lord Morley and Sir Edward Hastings before the Court of Chivalry described being first armed before the age of eighteen. A few claimed to have been in the saddle when as young as twelve, and one reckoned he first saw action at the age of nine.⁴⁵ Regardless of possible inaccuracy, it is certainly clear that, by the time they reached their majority, young men from armigerous families would have completed their training in arms and many, where opportunities available, would have already seen their initial years of war service.

In this vein, one may perceive quite explicitly just how East Anglia's military community fitted into the national scene. English armies during the Hundred Years War were comprised of a multitude of local military communities, and East Anglia's militarily-active gentry collectively comprised one such community. Like their counterparts all over the realm, they were trained in arms from childhood, they learnt French - the language of bureaucracy, heraldry, romance and international diplomacy - and as we shall see in their testimonies before the Court of Chivalry - they were imbued with the mentality of armigerous society, in which military service was an expectation, courage in arms brought in its train personal honour and the respect of comrades, and one's heraldic device confirmed one's place as a chivalrous individual, belonging to a chivalrous family of gentle blood.

The ideals of chivalry, however, were not solely the purview of England's warrior gentry. Their civilian counterparts were, in many instances, likewise thoroughly aware of chivalric values through literature, heraldry and chivalric pageantry. This trend is apparent amongst those non-military witnesses who spoke on

⁴³ *PL*, ed. Davis, i, pp. 199-200.

⁴⁴ Worcester, *Boke*, p. 77.

⁴⁵ In *Grey v. Hastings*, Sir William Berdewell, Sir Robert Morley, Thomas Hengrave and Thomas Clifford claimed to have first served in war at the age of twelve. Sir Leonard Kerdiston claimed to have been nine years old on his first campaign. *PCM*, i, pp. 390, 421, 492, 500, 456.

behalf of Thomas Lord Morley and Sir Edward Hastings in their Court of Chivalry disputes. Three of the nine testators who outlined the Morleys' tourneying credentials were clergymen.⁴⁶ This reminds one that the tournament was a grand occasion, drawing spectators from all professions, who evidently walked away impressed both by the splendor of the spectacle and by the feats of arms they had observed. In like fashion, several of the most vivid descriptions of heraldic display were provided by local parish priests or by Augustinian friars.⁴⁷ Indeed the words of these clerics have a familiar ring to them. They remind one of the type of diligent clergyman, still prevalent today, who has thoroughly researched the history of his own church and needs little prompting to industriously describe its every detail. Although such depositions on the one hand reveal that armigerous culture was alive and well in East Anglia, its expression very likely had different shades of meanings for different witnesses. The testimony of Morley's and Hastings' civilian deponents reveal quite clearly that they were captivated by the pageantry of chivalry - a sentiment far less common amongst militarily-active witnesses, who, as we shall see, largely stuck to the business of describing campaigns on which they had served. As such, one gains a sense that long-serving soldiers possessed a more martially-focused view of armigerous culture than the assorted clergymen and other civilians whose knowledge would have been limited to the science of heraldry and the high theory of chivalrous behaviour outlined in contemporary literature. Against this national backdrop, the character of East Anglia's military community may now be considered.

East Anglia's Military Community in Popular Memory

In 1419, towards the end of his long life, Sir Thomas Erpingham, as we have seen, patronised the construction of a window in the east chancel of the Austin Friary in Norwich.⁴⁸ This monument, although sadly no longer extant, represents perhaps the most startling memorial to the vibrancy of East Anglia's military community at the close of our period. It contained the names of 82 knights from the region, who had died without male heir, thereby consigning their family names in the direct line to

⁴⁶ TNA, C47/6/1, nos. 71-3.

⁴⁷ Ibid., nos. 158-64.

⁴⁸ See Chapter One.

extinction.⁴⁹ Most of these men, as far as can be discerned, had served in the king's wars at some point during their careers, and many had done so regularly. The accompanying inscription to the window was written in French and translated read:

Sir Thomas Erpingham, Knt. made this window
in honour of God and all the saints, in remembrance
of all the Lords, Barons, Bannerets, and Knights,
that have died without issue male in the counties
of Norfolk and Suffolk, since the coronation of the
noble King Edward III, which window was made in
the year of our Lord 1419.⁵⁰

The window contained eight panels, each bearing the arms of those selected, and was divided roughly into ten arms per panel. Its subject matter neatly combined the martial and social aspects of chivalric display in the one memorial, since these families were being remembered both for their military prowess and for having been members of the region's armigerous landowning elite. The arms themselves indicated their status while the fact that most had fought in France illustrated that these arms were well deserved. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that, at the time of the window's construction, Henry V's forces were heavily engaged in the conquest of Normandy, seizing one fortified town after another. Norfolk's young militarily-active elite was participating extensively in this enterprise, so what better time for the county's elder statesman to patronise a window that recalled the names, and by extension the deeds in arms, of bygone generations of local knights?

The reasons why Erpingham erected his window appear to have been numerous. At a most basic level, pious intent very likely played its part in his decision-making. Care for one's soul in the afterlife was a factor that existed in tandem with the more egocentric desire to advertise one's accomplishments and

⁴⁹ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, iv, pp. 86-8. Apart from Blomefield's account, see recently, K. Mourin, *The Erpingham Window of St Michael at Conisford: The Austin Friary Church* (Norfolk Heraldry Society, Norwich, 2000).

⁵⁰ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, iv, pp. 87-8.

family ties,⁵¹ and Erpingham evidently felt concerned for his immortal soul. In his will he gave 300 marks to the priory and convent of Norwich to found a chantry for a monk to sing daily mass for him and his family forever.⁵² His cannot be described merely as a faith of convenience, brought about by old age and impending death, for royal and ducal patronage had seen him establish ties with several churches and religious houses around East Anglia over the course of his lifetime.⁵³ The Austin friars, moreover, enjoyed relations with numerous prominent Norfolk families, so for a career man like Erpingham, his decision to erect a window in their Norwich friary may simply have reflected a propitious choice on his part. Indeed those listed upon the window may well have been selected by a diligent Austin friar who had been designated the task. Equally, these knights might simply have been those who made bequests to the friary, had become members of the confraternity, or had been buried within its walls. Erpingham too would not have known all of these men personally, for some were dead before he was even born. As one further possibility, Erpingham might merely have paid for a new window to be installed in place of an earlier one - perhaps ten or twenty years old - which might have been destroyed.

Regardless of these various possibilities, what sets the Erpingham Window apart from other local memorials of this epoch is its overt regionalism. The majority of architectural legacies left by Norfolk's gentry were, as we saw in Chapter Three, highly individualistic. They sought to enshrine the personal achievements and social connections of the individual or family in question.⁵⁴ For Erpingham, his window had a wider purpose, self-proclaimed in the attached inscription already cited. He wanted to memorialise those knights from Norfolk and Suffolk who had died without male issue. The birth of a son and heir reflected a central tenet of gentry life,⁵⁵ and every

⁵¹ C. Carpenter, 'Religion', *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, ed. R. Radulescu and A. Truelove (Manchester, 2005), pp. 134-50; C. Burgess, 'Late Medieval Wills and Pious Convention: Testamentary Evidence Reconsidered', *Profit, Piety and the Professions in Later Medieval England*, ed. M. Hicks (Gloucester, 1990), pp. 14-33; Richmond, 'Religion and the Fifteenth-Century English Gentleman', pp. 193-208; C. Richmond, 'Margins and Marginality: English Devotion in the Later Middle Ages', *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1992 Harlaxton Symposium* (Stamford, 1994), pp. 242-52.

⁵² Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, iv, p. 39.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

⁵⁴ See Chapter Three.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

man on Erpingham's window had, for whatever reason, failed in this regard. So too had Erpingham himself and consequently sentimentality may perhaps come closest to explaining his motives. In 1419 he was an elderly knight, over sixty years of age. He had recently excused himself from participating in Henry V's invasion of Normandy on the grounds that he was "an agid man, evermore willing and desiryng the good pees, reste and tranquillite of this realme".⁵⁶ Given his recent participation at Agincourt and Harfleur, one may judge from this explanation that his health was beginning to wane. With no male heir to his body, Erpingham would have known that his honourable family name would soon become extinct and that the bulk of his estates would soon pass to his nephew, Sir William Phelip.⁵⁷ Perhaps in a moment of quiet reflection he considered the many noble knights with whom he and his ancestors had served in France, who had in years passed faced the very prospect that now confronted him. His window might therefore primarily reflect his desire that they, and he, should not be forgotten. This might especially have been so, since Erpingham, as an experienced soldier himself, would have been well aware of the horrors of warfare and its harsh realities. The men named upon his window had not necessarily died on campaign, but to some degree their appearance served as a general reminder to those who saw it that local men had made great sacrifices by participating in their sovereign's national military expeditions.

The personnel named upon the window reinforce these perceptions of Erpingham's motives.⁵⁸ On the one hand, they included several of the region's foremost families of the fourteenth century, most prominently the Peches, Hemenhales, Mortimers, Verdons, Banyards, Inghams and Rosceylens. A few had long been extinct. The Inghams and Banyards, for instance, had collapsed in the male line during the middle years of Edward III's reign.⁵⁹ Anselm Marshal was of even older lineage, having been summoned to Edward II's military council in 1324, while the Rosceylens had briefly fallen from favour as a result of their support for Thomas

⁵⁶ Cited from John, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', 107.

⁵⁷ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 73.

⁵⁸ For those named upon the window, see Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, iv, pp. 86-8.

⁵⁹ *CP*, vii, pp. 58-60; H. E. Chetwynd-Stapylton, *The Stapeltons of Yorkshire: being a history of an English family from very early times* (London, 1968), p. 101; *The Rolls of Arms of Edward I*, ed. Brault, ii, pp. 37-8; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, v, p. 145.

of Lancaster in 1322.⁶⁰ Mixed in with these men were a few of more middling rank, including those from leading urban families. Robert Causton, John Colby, Roger Beckham and Edmund St Omer had risen to prominence as county sheriffs and M.P.s between the 1330s and the 1360s.⁶¹ Hugh Trussebut was evidently the ancestor of Laurence Trussebut, an active office holder in early Lancastrian Norfolk.⁶² The Bacons, John and Bartholomew, were Norwich kin of the Kerdistons.⁶³ Interestingly, comparatively few men of Erpingham's own generation were listed and the majority of arms belonged to families extinct by the end of the fourteenth century.⁶⁴ This confirms the long memory of Erpingham and men of his ilk. As a leading figure in East Anglian society, with an extensive military career behind him, Erpingham appears to have been well aware of those locals who had preceded him. Even if he had not personally chosen the names placed upon his window, this nonetheless fails to alter the fact that the memorials these knights had left behind in churches and family crypts had successfully kept them and their achievements in popular memory.

The Erpingham Window, however, was not merely a social memorial, sympathizing with the plight of those who had once been figures of regional importance. Its other principal motive was indisputably martial and many of these men were quite clearly being remembered predominantly because of their accomplishments with the sword. Sir Robert Benhale had been a trusted commander of Edward III during the 1330s, recalled by Geoffroi le Baker for his single combat prior to the battle of Halidon Hill.⁶⁵ At this time too (and for decades later), Sir Robert Causton was regularly named as defender of the coast and commissioner of array.⁶⁶ Sir Baldwin Boutetourt was a Suffolk-based cadet of the distinguished Boutetourt baronial family, who had been earnest participants in the king's wars since the reign

⁶⁰ *Parl. Writs.*, ii, ii, p. 641; *The Rolls of Arms of Edward I*, ed. Brault, ii, p. 365.

⁶¹ *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87; Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, pp. 42-4.

⁶² *CPR*, 1405-8, p. 494; *CPR*, 1408-13, p. 483.

⁶³ *CP*, vii, pp. 191-3.

⁶⁴ John Curson and John White are listed, but they are presumably not the men of Erpingham's generation, since both of the latter had male issue. *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, pp. 719-20; iv, pp. 829-31.

⁶⁵ *Chronicon Galfridi le Baker de Swynebroke*, ed. E. M. Thompson (Oxford, 1889), p. 51.

⁶⁶ E.g. *CPR*, 1354-8, p. 610; *CPR*, 1358-61, p. 101; *CPR*, 1364-7, p. 365.

of Edward I.⁶⁷ Oliver Lord Ingham and Sir Peter Rosceylen had done their part across the Channel during the uneasy 1320s and 1330s, when a veritable Cold War had played itself out between England and France, with Gascony the fuse waiting to be ignited.⁶⁸ Famed Norfolk and Suffolk followers of the Black Prince were also named on the window, including Sir Richard Walkefare, Sir Richard Ilney, and the brothers, Sir Thomas and Sir Hamo Felton.⁶⁹ Later knights from the region, who had carved out spectacular careers in arms for themselves, were likewise listed. These included Sir Nicholas Dagworth, Sir William Elmham, Sir Thomas Morieux and Sir Robert Salle.⁷⁰ Here we see the comparatively egalitarian world of the ‘military community’ at work, where humbler-born career soldiers of exceedingly impressive martial prowess could justifiably be mentioned in the same breath as the established knightly elite. This no doubt would have been a point that Erpingham, as a largely self-made man himself, would have wished to stress. Through these individuals it becomes plain that men who achieved noteworthy national reputations for their military activities were naturally held up in even higher esteem in their own locality, as exemplars of knighthood and pillars of their regional military community. Put simply, the deeds of these respected knights would have imbued East Anglia’s gentry with a broad sense of regional pride, for these men had demonstrated to king and country the high caliber of Norfolk’s and Suffolk’s warrior class.

This inclination to advertise the military pedigree of the region’s knightly elite becomes most evident when one focuses upon some of the more surprising choices listed on the window. There were men named who could hardly have justifiably been considered Norfolk or Suffolk men. Sir John Burgh, for instance, hailed from Burrough Green in Cambridgeshire and his principal link to Norfolk was through the marriage of his heiress to the Norfolk knight and Mowbray retainer, Sir John Ingoldesthorpe.⁷¹ Even more glaringly, military prowess could tip the scales. The Essex knight, Sir William Talemache, was one of the finest soldiers of the early

⁶⁷ *CP*, ii, pp. 233-5.

⁶⁸ *BL*, Cotton Nero C. VIII, f. 251; Gray, *Scalacronica*, p. 166; Andrew of Wyntoun, *Chronicle*, ed. Amours, ii, pp. 422-3; Sumption, *The Hundred Years War I*, p. 102.

⁶⁹ Green, ‘Edward the Black Prince and East Anglia’, p. 97; for their careers, see Chapters Four and Five.

⁷⁰ See Chapter Five.

⁷¹ *VCH Cambridgeshire*, vii, p. 142; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 475.

fourteenth century, having fought at St Sardos, in Scotland and in Flanders, which likely explains his presence on the window.⁷² Sir James Audley hailed from an Oxfordshire family that produced a multitude of successful career men. Audley himself achieved considerable favour with the Black Prince, fought at Crécy and Poitiers, served as governor of Guienne during the Prince's absence in 1366-7, and later became lieutenant of Poitou and the Limousin.⁷³ The substantial grants of land and money that came his way saw him acquire extensive property all over the realm. The fact that he held a few Norfolk and Suffolk manors, however, certainly did not make him a man from these counties.⁷⁴ Lastly, that most distinguished soldier of fortune, Sir Robert Knolles, may be considered in similar terms to Audley. As earlier elucidated, he was a Cheshire man, who settled in Norfolk in his old age.⁷⁵ This, it seems, provided a convenient excuse for him to be placed upon Erpingham's window and implicitly claimed as a local knight through and through.

Despite the presence of Burgh, Talemache, Audley and Knolles, everyone else on the window, as far as can be discerned, had strong enough links to Norfolk and Suffolk, either by birth or long-term marriage, that they could justifiably have been considered locals. The inclusion of the above four foreigners was evidently the exception rather than the rule. Robert Ufford, earl of Suffolk, was the only magnate named upon the window. He was listed alongside seven of his un-named relatives, which would presumably have included his sons, two of whom had achieved Garter stalls.⁷⁶ It is interesting that Henry of Grosmont was not named, given that he was the region's pre-eminent landholder in the mid-fourteenth century.⁷⁷ Similarly, no mention is made of Sir Walter Mauny, the Hainaulter who was granted vast Norfolk estates by dint of royal favour, and ended his days married to Margaret of Brotherton.⁷⁸ Unlike these latter two, the Uffords had been prominent regional gentry

⁷² TNA, E101/17/2 m. 4; C71/13 m. 20; *CPR*, 1338-40, p. 386.

⁷³ M. Jones, 'Sir James Audley', *ODNB*, ii, pp. 934-5.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ See Chapter Five.

⁷⁶ Earl Robert was the first successor Garter Knight in 1348. His elder son, Thomas, was inducted in 1360, and his younger, William, in 1375. Collins, *Order of the Garter*, pp. 289-90.

⁷⁷ See Chapter Two.

⁷⁸ See Chapter Five.

for well over a century prior to their receipt of the earldom of Suffolk.⁷⁹ In this sense, despite their noble status, they were indisputably locals and may have been considered the most outstandingly successful family from the region in living memory. No wonder then that eight of them had their shields painted on the window.

Celebrating the pedigree of armigerous families through architectural memorials was, as we have seen in earlier chapters, a common phenomenon throughout this epoch. In most instances though it was a kinship tie with a fellow greater gentry family, or trusted relationships with members of the nobility, that was usually advertised in knightly memorials. The common theme of the Erpingham Window, however, is not just a social, but also a military tie. The men named upon it spanned several generations - some were dead before others were even born - and the campaigns these knights served on were hugely varied in time and place. Consequently it was their armigerous status, and the act of military service that legitimized this status, that they had in common. Seemingly, Erpingham's window suggests that these knights were perceived as being collectively part of the one long national military tradition that had begun with the defence of Gascony in the late 1320s and was still continuing with the conquest of Normandy at the time of the window's completion. In this sense, the Erpingham Window was a celebration of East Anglia's contribution to a long, drawn-out, and increasingly 'national' conflict that was already achieving mythical status and would continue to act as a source of English patriotic pride for centuries to come.

The window was at one level a testament to those unfortunate East Anglian knights whose place in English society was lost forever by failure of their male line, but, erected as it was in the heart of Norwich, it was simultaneously a deliberate attempt to remind passers by of the sacrifices made by the region's military community, and just as importantly, to advertise the martial prowess of the knightly elite, implying - much in the style of a First World War monument - that local veterans of the Hundred Years War should not be forgotten. From what may be gleaned of Erpingham's character, this appears a likely explanation. Despite his rise as a courtier and soldier, he continued to live in his native Norfolk whenever possible

⁷⁹ See Chapter Two.

and retired there in his old age.⁸⁰ In this sense his attachment to the region of his birth is undeniable. Equally clear was his realisation that he would soon join the ranks of these esteemed knights of yesteryear - a point reinforced by his own presence in the last panel of the window. In his final years, as was common to many gentry of this epoch, Erpingham's thoughts would undoubtedly have turned to his personal legacy and the care for his soul in the afterlife. This window would have made sure that he, and others who had previously faced his situation, would long be remembered.

In many ways Erpingham's window more closely resembles the written rolls of arms common to the reigns of the first two Edwards than it does the architectural legacies of the fifteenth century. This heraldic and military focus is clearest when one compares Erpingham's window to the Norfolk and Suffolk Roll of Arms composed around 1400, containing the names and shields of 150 fourteenth-century East Anglian knights.⁸¹ The origins of this little-known roll are obscure, but it was probably commissioned by a local knight with a fine sense of history, who wished to have himself placed in the pantheon of East Anglian knighthood. It is, like the Erpingham Window, a commemorative roll, but it is naturally not limited to those knights who died without male issue. Numerous knights, dead by 1400, were named upon it. These included Oliver Lord Ingham, Sir Robert Benhale, Sir Roger Thorpe, Sir Thomas and Sir Peter Rosceylen, Sir Baldwin Boutetourt, Sir John Colby, Sir Robert Mortimer, Sir Robert Causton, Sir Robert Banyard, Sir John Verdon and Sir John and Sir Roger Norwich. The list provided represents an effective roll-call of East Anglia's armigerous elite during the early to high Edwardian age. Named also were established knights of the later fourteenth century, including a host of the Black Prince's East Anglian associates, such as Sir Richard Walkefare, Sir Richard Ilney, and Sir Hamo and Sir Thomas Felton. Again like Erpingham's window, there was no hesitation in naming alongside these ancient families *parvenus* of martial renown, such as Sir Stephen Hales, Sir William Elmham, Sir Nicholas Dagworth, and Sir Robert Salle.

⁸⁰ Curry, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', pp. 53-77; see also Chapter Two.

⁸¹ Oxford: Queen's College MS. 158, pp. 295-304. Sir Anthony Wagner suggested the roll was composed around 1400 because Sir Edward Hastings was named upon it and was thus head of his family at that stage (from 1396), but it was evidently before he lost his arms in his Court of Chivalry dispute with Lord Grey of Ruthin (1410).

In terms of the roll's layout, where the family in question had become extinct their most famous members appear to have been listed. Yet when the family was still alive and prominent, their current head was usually the individual named. Hence, Sir Edward Hastings appears, as does Sir Leonard Kerdiston, Sir John Ingoldesthorpe, Sir Miles Stapelton, Sir Thomas Erpingham, Sir John White, Sir Henry Inglose, Sir Simon and Sir George Felbrigg, Sir John Clifton, Sir John Harling, Sir Edmund Noon, Sir Edmund Thorpe, Sir William Berdewell and Sir Ralph Shelton. To a greater degree than Erpingham's Window too, esteemed knights who were not technically Norfolk or Suffolk men, or who were members of the higher nobility, were prominently included. So for example, Sir Robert Knolles, Sir William Talemache and Sir James Audley appear in this list too, as does the Black Prince's close companion, Sir Bartholomew Burgherssh, and perhaps most dubiously, the peer Edward Montague. The roll begins with William Ufford, earl of Suffolk, followed by the Bardolf arms, then those of Sir Walter Mauny. Towards the end, the arms of the region's resident and non-resident baronial families, the Morleys, Fitzwalters and Scales' are listed one after the other. Like on the Erpingham Window, the Uffords are similarly accorded a special place. Not only is Earl William's shield included, but so too are those of his kinsmen Edmund, Thomas, Walter, Ralph, John, William, and Robert. These cadets are not listed one after the other, but are scattered throughout the roll.

Such are the similarities between the two lists that it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the compiler of the names for Erpingham's window had consulted this roll, picking out those knights who had left no male heir. The Norfolk and Suffolk Roll of Arms is not a specifically military roll, and it was not produced for public display. Yet like Erpingham's window, it sought to commemorate East Anglia's fourteenth-century armigerous elite - which in this era was essentially indistinguishable from the military elite - while at the same time including numerous younger knights who were in their prime around 1400. In this sense, it too was placing the current generation of East Anglia's armigerous knightly families in a time-line, linking them back to their predecessors throughout the Edwardian age. Both of these rolls - one written and the other painted and displayed in the Austin Friary in Norwich - represent collective lists of the foremost families of East Anglian military society.

Erpingham's window was tied to dynastic extinction, but both lists perceive Norfolk's and Suffolk's knightly elite as a collective; hence the attempt to list all of these families in the one spot and across the generations, and not to forget those who had in recent decades died out. This endeavour, undertaken twice during the early Lancastrian period, strongly implies that in the localised world of East Anglian society, the region's knightly elite were collectively perceived as the cream of their respective generations. The long-fourteenth-century feel to these lists suggests that these men had, in the preceding six or seven decades, accomplished much that had made them worthy of commemoration, at home in their counties, and abroad in the king's service. Perhaps most importantly, their armigerous status, their knightly rank, and their military participation, marked them out as the leaders of East Anglian military society in their day, and in a heraldic and martial context, delineated them from those civilian gentry who were their equals in wealth and local influence.

The Norfolk and Suffolk Roll of Arms, of course, was put to paper and stored away by its owner. Although copies were evidently made, judging from the three that survive,⁸² it would nonetheless have been reading matter for the lucky few. The value of the Erpingham Window for contemporary Norfolk men, by contrast, is that it was made accessible to the general public. Any gentleman travelling through Norwich after 1419 could have observed a single monument that succinctly advertised the depth of the region's contribution to the king's wars. Simultaneously, this commemorative list boldly demonstrated to future generations that East Anglia had produced a multitude of warriors of the highest calibre, including trusted royal lieutenants and several Garter Knights. East Anglia's fourteenth-century knightly elite was evidently held in high esteem by later generations. What the region's 'military community' was actually like in practice during this period will form the central issue tackled in the remainder of this chapter.

East Anglia's Warrior Gentry: Martial Values And Military Solidarities

It has been shown in earlier chapters how military service was central to the knightly elite's sense of their own self-worth. Their honour was to a significant

⁸² A. R. Wagner, *A Catalogue of English Medieval Rolls or Arms* (Oxford, 1950), p. 73.

degree intimately tied to their military records, because throughout the fourteenth century war service still provided the indisputable evidence that an armigerous family deserved their coat-of-arms.⁸³ It was in this vein that Norfolk's barons and greater knights fought in their sovereign's wars generation after generation and it was through these endeavours that many could count among their ancestors veterans of Edward I's Welsh, Scottish and French wars in a direct line, through the high Edwardian age, all the way to the Normandy conquest of 1417.⁸⁴ Such an approach upholds the long-term view of the knightly class's chivalrous desire to maintain their family's genteel status through deeds in arms. Such attitudes were shared, but they were nonetheless personal to each family, and consequently one cannot ascribe common motive of this sort as a source of cohesion for East Anglia's warrior gentry.

What will be suggested is that the half century from the onset of Edward III's wars with France in 1337, covering approximately three generations, marks the period in which an overt sense of solidarity becomes apparent amongst the East Anglian knightly elite. Such knightly solidarities, reinforced by mutual war service, have already been hinted at, for instance in the private relations of the Lords Morley. Robert Lord Morley, Sir William Kerdiston II, Sir John and Sir Roger Norwich, Sir Hugh Hastings, Sir Miles Stapelton, Sir Thomas Felton, and the Ufford earls of Suffolk and their numerous kin, stood at the forefront of East Anglia's military community during the middle decades of the century, and it was through their exertions, and those of their fellow captains from across the realm, that the triumphs of Crécy and Poitiers, the harrying of the French on smaller expeditions, and the splendid march upon Rheims in 1360, were all accomplished. It was in these pivotal decades, the 1340s and 1350s, that the Hundred Years War was transformed from a struggle between the rival dynasties of Plantagenet and Valois into a concerted national war effort on the part of the English.⁸⁵

⁸³ Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*, pp. 71-86.

⁸⁴ See Chapters Three and Five.

⁸⁵ Allmand, *The Hundred Years War*, pp. 136-50; Barnie, *War in Medieval English Society*, pp. 97-116. See also, V. H. Galbraith, 'Nationality and Language in Medieval England', *TRHS*, fourth series, xxiii (1941), 113-28; R. Bean, 'War and the Birth of the Nation State', *Journal of Economic History*, xxxiii (1973), 203-21.

By 1360 English military society had brought the apparently much more powerful kingdom of France to its knees. It had acquired a favourable treaty at Brétigny and its battlefield victories were already becoming mythic acts of chivalry through the pens of contemporary chroniclers.⁸⁶ English armies, as we have seen, were comprised of gentry and common soldiers drawn from all parts of the realm; in other words, they were drawn from a plethora of local military communities. As such, rather like the way in which almost every English village in 1919 could erect memorials to their fallen veterans of the Great War, so every county, and probably every hundred, in the later fourteenth century could point to local men who had been at Crécy, or Poitiers, or Rheims, as men-at-arms, archers, or foot-soldiers. Norfolk's gentry were the pre-eminent families in their shire, and consequently the knightly elite, with their cross-county interests throughout East Anglia, were well placed to perceive themselves as being part of their particular region's contribution to Edward III's wars.

In terms of its immediate legacy, the impact of this brief period of unparalleled military triumph was that the next generation had plenty to live up to. In Norfolk the young warriors of the 1370s readily dove into the fray and followed the well-worn path of service across the Channel carved out by their fathers and grandfathers. Sir Hugh Hastings III took up where Sir Hugh II had left off, fighting in three military theatres during the 1370s and 1380s.⁸⁷ The same was true of Sir Ralph Shelton II, who followed in the footsteps of his father, Sir Ralph I, a veteran of Crécy and Poitiers.⁸⁸ Sir George Felbrigg had, as a young man, been at Rheims in 1360, and by the 1380s, Sir Simon Felbrigg was fighting in Spain.⁸⁹ Perhaps most enthusiastically, Sir Leonard Kerdiston, grandson of Sir William II, claimed to have been only nine years old when he first saw action in Scotland.⁹⁰ An exaggeration no doubt, but it at least reveals the eagerness with which the youngsters of the 1370s and 1380s looked to build upon the success of their fathers and grandfathers, upon whose

⁸⁶ For examples of Norfolk knights whose deeds in arms were praised by the chroniclers of this era, see Chapter Seven.

⁸⁷ *PCM*, i, *passim*.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, i, pp. 423-4.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, i, pp. 443-4.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, i, pp. 456.

knees they would likely have sat to learn first-hand about the heroic exploits of Edward III's early reign.

As regards this continuous tradition of military service, it is telling that when describing the campaigns on which they had served before the Court of Chivalry, East Anglia's gentry drew no distinction between successful and unsuccessful expeditions. The middle-aged deponents of 1407 spoke with pride of their presence at the siege of St-Malo in 1378, which in practical terms ended amidst bickering over strategy between John of Gaunt and his fellow magnates.⁹¹ The earl of Buckingham's expedition in 1380 - a pointless *chevauchée* - was described in equally glowing terms.⁹² These deponents were just as proud of their appearance in Richard II's magnificent host that entered Scotland in 1385, although this show of force did not lead to any meaningful military action.⁹³ Even the Iberian campaign of 1386-8 is described in chivalrous terms, with great emphasis placed upon the action seen at Brest on the way there, even though John of Gaunt failed to achieve his dynastic ambitions and his army was mainly noted by chroniclers for the disease that ran riot through its ranks.⁹⁴ What these developments point towards is a heightened unity of purpose amongst England's armigerous gentry. The generation of the 1340s and 1350s were held up as the finest exemplars of English knighthood, and those who followed in their footsteps up to the truce years of the 1390s actively sought to place themselves in this tradition. Finally, the triumphs of Agincourt and Normandy reinvigorated this attitude after twenty years of peace by providing the English aristocracy with a new halcyon age.⁹⁵

English society in the later Middle Ages was intensely regional, if not parochial. East Anglia's gentry were the most prominent members of their county community and the greater gentry in particular were extensively involved with each other at the shire level and in their private business concerns and family affairs.

⁹¹ Ibid., i, pp. 329, 390, 405, 423, 435, 458, 478, 492.

⁹² Ibid., i, pp. 329, 404, 405, 413, 427, 435, 458, 478, 486, 496, 497, 500.

⁹³ Ibid., i, pp. 329, 401, 405, 413, 421, 423, 425, 439, 444, 451, 456, 458, 464, 474, 495, 496, 519, 533.

⁹⁴ Ibid., i, pp. 393, 397, 399, 401, 421, 423, 425, 439, 443, 444, 445, 474, 478, 495, 500, 502, 509, 513.

⁹⁵ For the impact of these campaigns upon the generations that followed, see Chapter Seven.

Before the Court of Chivalry, regionalism provides an essential element when considering those gentry - soldiers and civilians - who spoke for Thomas Lord Morley and Sir Edward Hastings. Through these depositions it is possible to glean the common attitudes and experiences of some of East Anglia's most active warrior gentry, as well as the ways in which their attitudes differed from those of civilian deponents who appeared before the court.

The testimony provided by Morley's and Hastings' deponents is formulaic in nature. In their respective cases, as we have seen, both Morley and Hastings were the ones defending their arms and, as such, those who gave evidence on their behalf were required to demonstrate that these arms had long been in the possession of these families.⁹⁶ The details recalled by military participants were consequently of occasions when they had seen a Morley or Hastings bearing these arms in battle or at tournaments, while both soldiers and civilians described places where the disputed arms were on display. Although there was some scope for elaboration, it is quite clear that those who spoke did not bandy words about, but essentially stuck to the facts that would support their party's cause.⁹⁷ Perhaps as a result of this, these two disputes have failed to garner the scholarly attention granted to the *Scrope v. Grosvenor* case involving protagonists from the northwest, where the deponents were given a freer hand and thus outlined in their testimony exceptionally chivalrous acts, extravagant tournaments, crusading ventures and famous battles, providing a glimpse of chivalrous society at its most splendid and heroic.⁹⁸

All the same, the *Lovel v. Morley* and *Grey v. Hastings* disputes are far from bereft of these types of colourful recollections. A host of witnesses testified to the presence of the Morley arms in local parish churches and friaries. Some of their descriptions were painstakingly intricate, highlighting their grasp of the science of heraldry.⁹⁹ Heraldic evidence too formed a vital component amongst Sir Edward Hastings' witnesses, including at its most thrilling, descriptions of the Hastings arms

⁹⁶ For the background to these two disputes, see Chapter One.

⁹⁷ Indeed, the clerks of the Court, who recorded these depositions, unsurprisingly appear to have stuck to the bare essentials, neatly summarising the crux of each deponent's testimony.

⁹⁸ *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, *passim*.

⁹⁹ TNA, C47/6/1, nos. 158-64.

displayed in such varied locations as the residence of the Knights Hospitaller at Rhodes and in Marienberg Cathedral in Prussia.¹⁰⁰ Other depositions were likewise distinctly chivalric in tone. It was recalled that Thomas Bolyngton had erected banners in several churches to commemorate Robert Lord Morley, after the latter had perished on the Rheims campaign in 1360.¹⁰¹ John Jerningham explained how Sir William Morley's coat armour had been presented to the parish church at Somerton.¹⁰² Seven deponents described a little knightly effigy in Reydon Church that marked the burial spot of the heart of a thirteenth-century Sir Robert Morley, who had died on Crusade in 1288.¹⁰³ The judges in the *Grey v. Hastings* case at one point adjourned to the Hastings' family church at Elsing. There they examined first hand the magnificent incised brass tomb constructed in memory of Sir Hugh Hastings I. This remarkable monument, as we have seen, not only bore witness to the lineage of the Hastings as a cadet branch of the earls of Pembroke, but also included on the side panels depictions of a number of warrior magnates, including Edward III himself, which graphically illustrated the familial and military ties enjoyed by the Hastings with prominent members of the higher nobility.¹⁰⁴ Lastly, returning to *Lovel v. Morley*, since a pillar of the Morleys' argument was the family's successful defence of their arms against the challenge of Nicholas Lord Burnell outside Calais in 1347, numerous veterans of the siege gave detailed accounts of how judgment had been given in Robert Lord Morley's favour,¹⁰⁵ while one testator even made passing comment about an undocumented occasion on the Iberian campaign of 1366-7, when Sir John Morley had similarly been forced to defend his arms.¹⁰⁶

Tourneying memories likewise featured in these disputes. Nine of Morley's deponents described the family's participation at jousts and melees at Bungay, Bury

¹⁰⁰ *PCM*, i, pp. 429, 441, 453.

¹⁰¹ TNA, C47/6/1, nos. 158-64.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, no. 82.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, nos. 151-7.

¹⁰⁴ Dennison and Rogers, 'The Elsing Brass and Its East Anglian Connections', pp. 167-93.

¹⁰⁵ Some accounts of this event are quite colourful. For instance, one of Lovel's witnesses, Sir Thomas Blount, described how he missed the adjudication because he was in his tent recovering from a *forcelet* to the leg. TNA, C30/26/69, no. 176.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, C47/6/1, no. 32.

St Edmunds, Dartford, Dunstable, Norwich and Thetford.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps most evocatively, Sir William Pembridge recalled the spectacular tournament at Smithfield in June 1343, at which Robert Lord Morley had competed as the Pope, accompanied by twelve companions dressed as cardinals.¹⁰⁸ These lavish events serve as a reminder of just how commonplace and widespread the tournament was in fourteenth-century England. They also hint at the likelihood of the tournament's prominence amongst the East Anglian gentry. As early as 1331 Robert Lord Morley had proclaimed a tournament at Stepney in London,¹⁰⁹ while the Norwich and Thetford tourneys mentioned by his grandson's witnesses suggest that such festivities were a regular feature on the East Anglian gentry's calendar. Lending weight to this argument, the only recorded jousting fraternity of this epoch was formed by Henry of Grosmont in nearby Lincolnshire.¹¹⁰ It is possible that similar annual feats of arms may have occurred in Norfolk, a suggestion lent credence by the depiction of a certain "feast of the peacock" on the brass tomb of Robert Braunche at King's Lynn; a memorial that hints tantalizingly that Norfolk may well have played host to substantial gatherings that drew together the flower of English chivalry from across the realm.¹¹¹

The fact that East Anglians could fondly recall splendid tournaments, and could describe in minute detail specific armorial bearings erected in various locations across the region, reinforces the importance of pageantry and heraldry as expressions of contemporary armigerous culture in the domestic world of the county gentry. This sort of testimony, however, falls a long way short of demonstrating the presence of a distinctive 'military community' in the region. After all, such recollections were common to both soldier and civilian witnesses. In this light, if there is a notable difference to be found in the outlooks of Morley's and Hastings' military and civilian testators, then it is surely grounded in the former's active participation on military enterprises.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., nos. 2, 7, 14, 15, 19, 71-3, 92.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., no. 7.

¹⁰⁹ J. Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry: Chivalric Society and Its Context 1270-1350* (Woodbridge, 1983), p. 62.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 63.

¹¹¹ *Catalogue of Rubbings of Brasses and Incised Slabs*, ed. M. Clayton (London, 1968), pl. 39.

The practical act of military service was the one obvious area in which the warrior gentry truly stood apart from their civilian contemporaries. It was something that every soldier had in common and that no civilian could justifiably claim to fully appreciate.¹¹² Although never directly articulated (and therefore a matter of scholarly interpretation), the testimony of those long-serving knights and esquires who spoke for Morley and Hastings confirms this view. Through their depositions, chivalric culture and military experience may clearly be seen to intertwine, as the recollections of young and old overlapped. This is especially so since we are dealing with an extremely militarily-active sample in these two disputes. The types of experienced soldiers who gave evidence appear to have been either the multi-generational knightly participant or the individual career soldier. Such men, one may reasonably suggest, represented the inner core of their local military community, since they were among the region's more reputable warriors, in some cases possessing exceptionally impressive military records. Moreover, as we saw in the previous chapter, long-serving soldiers naturally found themselves fighting in the latter part of their careers alongside comrades young enough to be their sons, or even their grandsons. Soldiers who could recall Agincourt had begun their careers with men who could remember Najéra, who in turn had fought with veterans of Crécy and Poitiers.

In this sense, common service on the same campaigns would have engendered a measure of camaraderie, or at least shared memory, amongst old soldiers. The renowned fourteenth-century French knight, Geoffroi de Charny, eloquently described the nature of this unity born on the field of battle in his *Book of Chivalry*, when he wrote of knights who perform deeds of prowess whilst “suffering great hardship, making strenuous efforts, and enduring fearful physical perils and the loss of friends whose deaths they have witnessed in many great battles in which they have taken part; these experiences have often filled their hearts with great distress and

¹¹² The emotional impact of shared military experience has been starkly uncovered by scholars of twentieth-century warfare. For example, Charles Carrington, a First World War veteran of the Somme and Passchendaele, wrote reflectively in 1968, “Twenty million of us...shared the experience with one another but with no one else, and are what we are because, in that war, we were soldiers”. Cited in J. M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (London, 1985), p. 293.

strong emotion”.¹¹³ This attitude pervades the testimony in both Court of Chivalry disputes. What all of these men had in common, especially those who had been in the saddle for many years, was experience of the danger, excitement, fear and potential glory of warfare, and for some, the more specific recollections of the same camp, the same stormy night, the same bloody battle, or the joys of the same victory. This was a sentiment and a simultaneous source of pride that transcended generations and sliced through the social hierarchy of East Anglian society, for it was ultimately based upon shared recollections of martial activity, be it on the field at Halidon Hill, at Crécy, Poitiers, or Rheims, or on any of the expeditions of the 1370s and 1380s. Indeed, as we shall see in the next chapter, this was a tradition that extended into the years after the *Grey v. Hastings* dispute to unite the veterans of the 1370s and 1380s with the younger men who cut their military teeth in France from 1415 onwards.

Bonds solidified on the field of battle, of course, when transposed into the world of regional genteel society, represent only one form of social intercourse. The locally-based friendships and associations detailed in Chapters Three and Four and developed through joint service in local administration, participation as feoffees, witnesses and attorneys, shared magnate affiliations, kinship ties, and bonds of tenure, naturally also played their part in engendering a sense of unity amongst the East Anglian warrior gentry. Yet these multifarious relationships encompassed civilians as well as soldiers, and were based more around shared social and economic status than mutual vocation. In other words, the ‘county community’ comprised greater and lesser gentry, with commoners beneath them, distinguished from one another at each level by wealth, landownership, political influence, prestige and so on. In Morley’s and Hastings’ choices of militarily-active witnesses, we are privy to the more egalitarian world of East Anglia’s ‘military community’, where, obviously within the bounds of genteel society, social rank played second fiddle to military prowess. Within the confines of the Court of Chivalry, little-known old esquires, like John Raven or Henry Hoo,¹¹⁴ were in their element, invited to provide evidence by Thomas Lord Morley precisely because their decades of war service had made them ideally suited to act on his behalf, since they had shared the battlefields of France with his

¹¹³ Geoffroi de Charny, *The Book of Chivalry of Geoffroi de Charny*, ed. and tr. R. W. Kaeuper and E. Kennedy (Philadelphia, 1996), p. 111.

¹¹⁴ TNA, C47/6/1, nos. 6, 10.

father and grandfather. It was, moreover, primarily East Anglians who readily flew to the cause of Morley and Hastings. To some extent, the limitations of travel and communication would have behooved the protagonists to seek witnesses close by, for testimony was heard in urban centres like London and Norwich, but also on family manors, and in parish churches and religious houses, dotting East Anglia. Nonetheless, Morley's and Hastings' deponents did not simply comprise those men nearest at hand, and certain factors strongly indicate that both men were galvanising the warrior gentry of their native region to take their part and to uphold their honour.

With a few noteworthy exceptions, neither protagonist relied upon bonds of kinship, tenure or retainer. Of Morley's 102 lay deponents, it has already been noted that only three knights asserted kinship or retaining ties to his family.¹¹⁵ Seventeen of Morley's sub-knightly testators claimed stints of war service under his family's banner, but only six declared that they had done so regularly.¹¹⁶ Superficially, Sir Edward Hastings appears to offer a complete contrast in this regard, since, as we saw in Chapter Four, he blatantly utilised his family's Lancastrian affiliations when garnering support. Yet, as touched upon, it cannot be baldly claimed that Hastings was assisted by the Lancastrian affinity.¹¹⁷ By 1407 Gaunt was dead, Henry IV in poor health and preoccupied with his royal duties, and Sir Edward Hastings was every inch the young knight yet to make his mark. He had barely reached his majority and in comparative terms his military reputation was negligible. Nevertheless, the old veterans of Gaunt's French, Scottish and Spanish wars appeared from all corners of East Anglia to defend young Hastings' armorial rights and it appears from the reverence with which they described the deeds in arms of his ancestors that they participated out of loyalty and respect to the memory of his heroic father and grandfather, rather than because of their longstanding Lancastrian connections.¹¹⁸ This was a show of military solidarity that was horizontal rather than vertical in nature.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., nos. 28, 30, 41; nos. 28 and 30 were his kinsmen.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., nos. 5, 10, 11, 20, 26, 59.

¹¹⁷ John of Gaunt and Henry of Bolingbroke both personally spoke in favour of the Scropes in this dispute. For Gaunt's and Bolingbroke's depositions, see *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, ii, pp. 163-8.

¹¹⁸ For Sir Edward Hastings' military record, see Chapters One and Three. For the Lancastrian connections of his deponents, see Chapters Two, Four and Five.

What may be inferred then is that both Thomas Lord Morley and Sir Edward Hastings accrued extensive support from the warrior gentry of their native East Anglia primarily as a result of the respect in which their families were held within local military society. Knowledge and love of chivalry and the martial arts is a common theme amongst the testators in both disputes, and in their own words their respect for heroic deeds in war and tournaments, as well as their keen appreciation of the intricacies of military architecture and heraldic display, consistently shines through. Robert Lord Morley was remembered for tourneying dressed as the Pope, for his leadership at Sluys and Winchelsea, for his participation at Crécy, his successful defence of his arms against Lord Burnell at Calais, and his death in France in 1360.¹¹⁹ Sir Hugh Hastings II was revered for having fought the Saracens and for having served extensively in France.¹²⁰ His son, Sir Hugh III, likewise had fought in the East and across the Channel, and was especially remembered for his courage at the siege of Brest and, like Robert Lord Morley, for having died a soldier's death, on campaign in Spain.¹²¹ Importantly too, those who so fondly recalled the military achievements of the Morleys and Hastings ranged in social composition from some of the most prominent knights in the eastern counties to a significant body of obscure esquires about whom very little is known. Despite the obvious disparity in their incomes and status, the majority of these soldiers could point to long years in the saddle and could claim participation on large-scale campaigns and in famous national victories. These militarily-active deponents, men evidently proud of their martial achievements and respected for them, were thus providing testimony before a court specifically designed to deal with matters relating to military and chivalric concerns.¹²² The Court of Chivalry - the world of the soldier - was their world, and within its confines what they had to say was evidently considered well worth listening to.

It is thus unsurprising that the majority of militarily-active testators had few discernible ties of kinship, tenure or retainer with the Morleys or Hastings. Where they had forged a common bond was on the fields of France, Scotland and Spain, for

¹¹⁹ E.g. TNA, C47/6/1, nos. 7, 20, 10, 96, 158-64.

¹²⁰ E.g. *PCM*, i, pp. 533, 426.

¹²¹ E.g. *Ibid.*, i, pp. 435-9; 439-42.

¹²² Keen, 'Origins of the Constable's Court', pp. 135-48.

even if they had never served in the same company, they had been part of the same broad experience that was already becoming mythologised in popular memory.¹²³ All had proven themselves proficient soldiers and chivalrous men, especially those with two or three decades of war service under their belts. It was men of this *mien* who would have cared the most that the Morleys and Hastings - nationally-renowned warrior families from their own locality - might unjustly lose their arms. For a knight or esquire imbued with the values of chivalry, who was deeply proud of his own armorial bearings, it would have proven a blight upon his personal honour had he known the disputed arms to rightfully belong to the Morleys or Hastings, yet had said nothing when given the opportunity.

This then was the world of East Anglia's 'military community' - albeit viewed from the perspective of its inner core (i.e. its most militarily-active members). It was a world in which one's status was measured by one's war record and chivalrous conduct, not by one's income, landed wealth, or domestic political influence. It was not a community that took practical form. It goes without saying that there were no definable boundaries, nor official members. It was rather a community loosely and informally held together by shared military experiences and an appreciation of chivalry. Its regional character was the inevitable result of the localism of English gentry society. These soldiers had all served in the king's wars and it was natural that the military men with whom they most regularly interacted on an everyday basis happened to live in their part of the realm. Above all, the testimony of East Anglian deponents who spoke for Thomas Lord Morley and Sir Edward Hastings reflects the importance these local soldiers attached to ties forged on campaign, as well as an appreciation of the honour that flowed from such service. These men appear to have fervently believed that Morley and Hastings deserved to keep their arms and consequently, even though many maintained little or no discernible domestic associations with either family, they nonetheless went out of their way to assist them in their hour of need.

Conclusion

¹²³ See Chapter Seven.

East Anglia's 'military community' was held together by an adherence to the shared cultural values of chivalry, combined with common experience in the king's wars and shared memories of these events. It was not a closed, or a definable, community, and certainly is more readily discernible amongst those men with long military records who made war their vocation. The warrior gentry in their day-to-day existence would hardly have felt a constant sense of unity with their fellow soldiers. Domestic activities, of the type outlined in Chapters Three and Four, brought together militarily-active and civilian gentry and pushed issues of income, politics, and local prestige to the fore, while many civilians were undeniably as aware of chivalric architecture, pageantry, heraldry, and theory as their militarily-active contemporaries.

Yet the testimony given by East Anglians before the Court of Chivalry highlights that war veterans, by the very fact of their military participation, possessed shared experiences that separated them from their civilian counterparts. Some Norfolk soldiers certainly maintained friendships with their fellow warriors that had been developed in France, Scotland or Spain.¹²⁴ More generally though, it seems that men who had dedicated themselves consistently to a martial lifestyle were respected for it. Courage in combat, and the display of those virtues expected of a worthy warrior, proved a great equalizer amongst the militarily-active gentry of East Anglia. It is in this context that lowly esquires with twenty years military service behind them could speak confidently before the Court of Chivalry alongside some of the wealthiest knightly landowners in the region. In their contribution to the wars of their generation, these were men of similar stamp and like mind. Before the Court of Chivalry, we may perceive the informal bond of the long-serving gentry soldier in action. Most of these men hailed from the same part of the kingdom and at varying levels would have stood out as noteworthy warriors in their own immediate locality. The fact that local men with long military records were recognised for their achievements by their fellow soldiers is graphically displayed upon the Erpingham Window, where Sir Thomas Erpingham sought to memorialise those upholders of the region's military traditions who had faded into memory, as he too was soon to do. His window, and the Norfolk and Suffolk Roll of Arms, also reinforced the fact that, for the period between 1350 and 1430, Norfolk's warrior gentry had plenty of which to be proud. How future

¹²⁴ See Chapters Three and Four.

generations perceived this era, and sought to uphold its traditions, will form the basis of our final chapter.

THE DECLINE OF THE MILITARY COMMUNITY

An ongoing theme of this thesis has been the overlap in Norfolk between the military and county communities. It has been suggested that the upper echelons of Norfolk's warrior class successfully balanced their daily duties as landlords and office holders with their responsibilities to serve the king in his wars. After 1430 however, the martial inclinations of the English gentry are broadly perceived to have diminished. Moreover, for many years before this, it had become increasingly difficult for noble commanders to find the requisite numbers of men-at-arms to fill out their retinues and lesser-born archers were often substituted in their stead. Moreover, it has been persuasively argued that the English cause in France came to be upheld not by military society in general, but rather by a minority of professional soldiers who had remained across the Channel and whose wealth and livelihood depended upon the maintenance of these landed acquisitions.¹ This was a view echoed by various contemporary and near-contemporary authors who bemoaned the failures of England's war effort and the apparent apathy of its gentry.² One of the best-known, and certainly one of the most explicit, articulations of these perceived shortcomings was William Worcester's so-called 'lamentation of chivalry', written in his *Boke of Noblesse* during the early 1450s.³ The segment itself read:

But now of late daies, the grettir pite is, many one that ben descended of noble bloode and borne to armes, as knightis sonnes, esquiers, and of othir gentille bloode, set hem silfe to singuler practik....as to lerne the pratique of law or

¹ Allmand, *Lancastrian Normandy*; Allmand, 'The Lancastrian Land Settlement in Normandy', 461-79; M. R. Powicke, 'Lancastrian Captains', *Essays in Medieval History Presented to Bertie Wilkinson*, ed. T. A. Sandquist and M. R. Powicke (Toronto, 1969), pp. 371-82; Massey, 'The Land Settlement in Lancastrian Normandy', pp. 76-96.

² E.g. *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye. A poem on the use of sea-power, 1436*, ed. G. Warner (Oxford, 1926); William Caxton, 'Order of Chyualry', *The Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton*, ed. W. J. B. Crotch (London, EETS, Original Series, no. clxxvi, 1928), pp. 82-4.

³ The *Boke* was begun by Worcester in the early 1450s and was later amended to suit Yorkist sentiment, before being presented to King Edward IV on the eve of his expedition to France in 1475. McFarlane, 'William Worcester', pp. 212-15.

custom of lande, or of civile matier, and so wastyn gretlie theire tyme in suche nedelese business.⁴

Worcester continued to contrast negatively men of this ilk with those aristocratic soldiers of earlier generations who:

hathe despendid .xxx. or .xl. yeris of his daies in gret jubardies in youre antecessourys conquestis and werris.⁵

And he concluded that:

suche singuler practik shulde not be accustomed and occupied undewly withe suche men that be come of noble birthe but he be the yonger brother, havying not whereof to lyve honestly.⁶

Worcester's description has commonly been utilised by scholars of the Hundred Years War to support the perception that English interest in the conflict declined.⁷ In this fashion Worcester's lamentation has in some quarters been understood as indicative of a national malaise (and certainly that is what Worcester himself was implying).⁸ Its broader implications for the English gentry at large are not our concern here. What is of more immediate relevance is the fact that Worcester, although born in Bristol, spent the majority of his working life as clerk and unofficial private secretary to Sir John Fastolf, and consequently lived with the old knight in London and Norfolk and travelled extensively throughout East Anglia on Fastolf's business.⁹ As such, it will be suggested that Worcester's work was specifically East Anglian in its focus and that his view of English military culture in decline resulted directly from

⁴ Worcester, *Boke*, p. 77.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 77-8.

⁶ Ibid., p. 78.

⁷ E.g. *Society at War*, ed. C. T. Allmand (Edinburgh, 1973), pp. 99-100; M. H. Keen, 'The End of the Hundred Years War: Lancastrian France and Lancastrian England', *Nobles, Knights and Men-At-Arms in the Middle Ages* (London, 1996), p. 255.

⁸ For an analysis of the *Boke of Noblesse* itself, see C. T. Allmand and M. H. Keen, 'History and the Literature of War: The *Boke of Noblesse* of William Worcester', *War, Government and Power in Late Medieval France*, ed. C. T. Allmand (Liverpool, 2000), pp. 92-105.

⁹ McFarlane, 'William Worcester', pp. 199-224.

his first-hand experiences in the company of his master Fastolf, and from his personal appreciation of East Anglian chivalry. Put simply, the ‘lamentation of chivalry’ provides a perfect avenue through which to examine Norfolk military society between 1430 and the close of the fifteenth century.

In this regard we are fortunate that Worcester lived in a household about which a great deal is known. Fastolf’s own voluminous records, supplemented by the Paston Letters, give the historian a remarkable insight into Worcester’s surroundings. From a purely military standpoint, comparatively few East Anglian warriors after 1430 maintained careers in the saddle to match those of their predecessors, especially in comparison with the stamp of soldier who spoke for Thomas Lord Morley and Sir Edward Hastings before the Court of Chivalry. Most professional soldiers in the wake of the Normandy conquest were, besides, long resident in France and made only fleeting appearances in their native East Anglia. Men of this type, such as Sir Henry Inglose, Sir John Clifton and Sir William Oldhall, appear in the Paston Letters at various stages, especially after their retirements from the French wars, but they are rarely central players in the East Anglian political dramas of the age.¹⁰

This chapter, therefore, will take the traditional material adopted when studying the well-worn subject of Norfolk political society in the fifteenth century and will utilise it to see what it reveals about the changing face of the military community. How dearly were the values described in the previous chapter still held in the later part of the century? How was armigerous culture expressed in Norfolk once English military fortunes were on the wane? Had the character of armigerous culture in the region altered? And how accurately does Worcester’s lament in fact reflect the nature of East Anglian martial culture in the 1450s? These are the questions upon which we shall principally focus and through which we will seek to tie together the various strands of social, cultural and military history that lie at the heart of this thesis.

This final chapter will be divided into three sections. Section One will outline the political developments evident in East Anglia after 1430, in order to highlight just how different Worcester’s world was from the Norfolk of the preceding eighty years,

¹⁰ *PL*, ed. Davis, i, pp. 9, 31, 104-5; ii, pp. 56, 68, 70, 557; ii, pp. 150, 151-2; ii, pp. 3-4, 47, 48, 53, 175, 217, 524, 557-9.

while simultaneously placing Worcester's views in his 'lamentation of chivalry' (and more generally in his *Boke of Noblesse*) in the context of his life with Sir John Fastolf. Section Two will argue that the period between 1350 and 1430 was to Worcester, and to many of his East Anglian contemporaries, a halcyon age of military accomplishment, which was both a source of regional pride and a considerable burden to live up to. Finally, Section Three will investigate the changing character of East Anglia's military community as the fifteenth century progressed, analysing how armigerous culture evolved in the region after 1430, relating Worcester's 'lamentation' to his direct experiences of East Anglian military society at the end of the Hundred Years War, and situating his views in their national context.

Norfolk After 1430: An Altered Political Landscape

Norfolk political society prior to 1430, as we have seen, was relatively peaceable by contemporary standards and, although comprising a variety of interlocking local social networks, solidarities nonetheless broadly existed amongst the county's elite. There was to be found a healthy balance of noblemen in the shire, most of whom were absentees, and none of whom were particularly interested in aggressively asserting their dominance over the area. As such, there were a variety of lords with whom Norfolk's gentry could seek employment and most of the county elite was able quite comfortably to serve more than one lord at the same time. After the usurpation, these attributes were maintained through the Beaufort-Erpingham clique, which provided an indirect conduit for the Lancastrian kings to express their lordly power as dukes of Lancaster. Simultaneously, this clique brought numerous Norfolk gentry into royal service as councillors and household men. The success of this style of government owed much to the absence of any alternative source of authority in the region, with the traditional magnate families of the later fourteenth century suffering either political misfortune, extinction, or minority crises.¹¹

This balance of power, however, altered considerably during the 1430s and 1440s and it did so for several reasons. Foremost amongst these were the deaths of Thomas Beaufort and Sir Thomas Erpingham in 1426 and 1428 respectively. In the short-term very little changed. Sir William Phelip, himself an established figure at

¹¹ See Chapters Two and Four.

court, acquired the inheritance of his uncle, Erpingham, and by right of his wife, the Bardolf heiress, was perceived as the natural heir to Beaufort's seat of Wormegay in the county's west.¹² What stymied Phelip's natural succession to leadership of the county were his own comparative limitations as a political animal and, just as importantly, the return from France of William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk, in 1430.¹³

Through the Paston Letters of the 1440s, the earl of Suffolk has been forever painted as a magnate of the worst possible type - maintaining his closest followers in their local disputes and using his influence over the malleable Henry VI to dominate Norfolk county society, running roughshod over those power structures that had existed in harmony since 1399.¹⁴ This view has recently been revised by Helen Castor, who has shown convincingly that Suffolk was already smoothly inserting himself onto the East Anglian county scene even before his return to England. His acquisition of authority in Norfolk was gradual and was not particularly resented by the upper echelons of the Beaufort-Erpingham clique.¹⁵

Suffolk - a younger son whose father and elder brother had both perished on the Agincourt campaign - indeed had a number of advantages playing in his favour. By the early 1420s he already controlled the bulk of his family's landed stake in East Anglia, as a result of the deaths in rapid succession of his mother and nieces.¹⁶ In France, Suffolk had proven himself an able soldier and loyal Lancastrian. Having served at Agincourt as a minor, he had continued to see action throughout the 1420s, holding such high-ranking posts as admiral of Normandy, governor of Chartres and lieutenant of Caen.¹⁷ Upon his return home, he was appointed to the minority council and began what was to be a long and eventful career at court.¹⁸ Late in 1430 he shored up his position in Norfolk by marrying Alice Chaucer, who was cousin to the

¹² *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, pp. 71-4.

¹³ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 88-9.

¹⁴ Wolffe, *Henry VI*, pp. 121-4; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 584-8; R. L. Storey, *The End of the House of Lancaster* (London, 1966), pp. 54-7; Richmond, *The Paston Family: The First Phase*, pp. 227, 233-5.

¹⁵ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 82-155.

¹⁶ *CPR, 1416-22*, p. 48; *CCR, 1419-22*, p. 247; *CFR, 1422-30*, pp. 43-4; *CFR, 1413-22*, p. 273; *CCR, 1413-19*, pp. 461, 263-5; *CPR, 1413-16*, pp. 402-3.

¹⁷ *CP*, xii (i), pp. 444-5.

¹⁸ Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 43, 280, 284-6; Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship*, pp. 149-51, 172-6, 194-9, 246-8, 251-4.

Beauforts and whose first husband had been Sir William Phelip's elder brother, John.¹⁹ By these means Suffolk associated himself through the bonds of kinship with the leaders of Norfolk county society, and in light of his earldom, his proximity to the king, his military reputation, and his extensive landed inheritance in the region, he soon became an obvious leader of county society in the eyes of the local gentry. Indeed his only challenger was John, third Mowbray duke of Norfolk, who only threw his hat into the Norfolk political arena after his mother's dowry deprived him of his traditional baronial seat at Axholme in Lincolnshire.²⁰

The well-known story of East Anglian high politics prior to the duke of Suffolk's fall from power in 1449-50 was one of competing allegiances. Suffolk readily acquired an impressive following amongst the Norfolk and Suffolk gentry, most notably obtaining the services of Sir Thomas Tuddenham, a former household man of Thomas Beaufort, and John Heydon, a prominent lawyer lured away from the pay of Sir William Phelip.²¹ After seven years of strained relations, Phelip eventually realised that he possessed neither the social status nor the political talent to compete with Suffolk's burgeoning ambition. By 1437-8, Phelip had reached an accommodation with Suffolk, and it was around this time that Tuddenham and Heydon became active in Suffolk's affinity, becoming increasingly powerful figures in the region.²²

The general character of lord-gentry relations in Norfolk, however, remained much the same as it had done under the exclusive rule of the Beaufort-Erpingham circle. Suffolk, rather like John of Gaunt and the Black Prince in the previous century, became a man well-worth befriending. Thomas Lord Scales, his old wartime companion, became one of his strongest supporters in the region, in the process helping to reinforce the idea that Suffolk was now the lord to whom the Norfolk

¹⁹ *CPR*, 1429-36, p. 86.

²⁰ Archer, 'Rich Old Ladies', pp. 24-5, 29; *CCR*, 1429-35, pp. 204-5, 208-14; *CFR*, 1437-45, p. 24; Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 104-5.

²¹ *CCR*, 1429-35, pp. 361-2; *CFR*, 1430-7, p. 59; L. E. James, 'The Career and Political Influence of William de la Pole, First Duke of Suffolk, 1437-50' (B. Litt, Oxford, 1979), p. 244.

²² Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 88-93; TNA, DL37/11 nos. 15, 31, 32; DL28/5/2 f. 117v; Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 425.

gentry should naturally look for leadership.²³ As such, Suffolk rapidly succeeded in developing contacts with other prominent knights from the county - men who a decade earlier had been active in the Beaufort-Erpingham circle. These included Sir John Clifton, John Fitzrauf, Sir John Heveningham, Sir Andrew Ogard, Sir Miles Stapelton and Edmund Witchingham.²⁴ As had long been the case in Norfolk, exclusive loyalty to a single lord was a comparative rarity. Richard, duke of York, for instance, had in his pay Clifton, Witchingham and Lord Scales, while Ogard was especially prominent in his service.²⁵ It was nonetheless apparent that the earl (later duke) of Suffolk had almost imperceptibly become the central figure in East Anglian politics, keeping in his pay a variety of loyal retainers amongst the county elite, as well as maintaining positive indirect relations with many of the established knightly families of the region.

Young John, the third Mowbray duke of Norfolk, consequently faced an uphill battle in his attempts to belatedly assert his influence over the county whose name he bore. His grandfather's closest Norfolk associates were the Morleys, Felbriggs and Lancasters. The latter family had faded from the political scene after the death of their most successful member, the Mowbray steward, John II.²⁶ The Morleys became extinct in the male line in 1442, not long after Norfolk first turned his attention to the county, and his efforts in that direction were further hindered by the fact that Isabella, widow of Thomas, fourth Lord Morley, was the earl of Suffolk's sister.²⁷ The most recent connections that Norfolk had with the gentry elite were thus with Sir Simon Felbrigg, who had undertaken business relations with Norfolk's father during the

²³ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 98-9.

²⁴ E.g. *CPR*, 1441-6, p. 427; *CCR*, 1441-7, p. 443; *CCR*, 1429-35, pp. 361-2; *CCR*, 1435-41, pp. 62, 102; *CPR*, 1446-52, p. 111; *A Calendar of the Feet of Fines for Suffolk*, ed. W. Rye (Ipswich, 1900), p. 303. Suffolk retained Clifton and acted as Clifton's chief feoffee and the overseer of his will. R. Virgoe, 'Inheritance and Litigation in the Fifteenth Century: The Buckenham Disputes', *Journal of Legal History*, xv (1994), 23-40; Stapelton married Suffolk's niece. James, 'Career and Political Influence', p. 248; Suffolk was named Godfather of Fitzrauf's son. *CFR*, 1437-45, p. 313.

²⁵ Smith, 'Aspects of the Career of Sir John Fastolf', pp. 3, 103; P. A. Johnson, *Duke Richard of York* (Oxford, 1988), p. 17; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 670-1.

²⁶ See Chapters Four and Five.

²⁷ *CP*, ix, p. 219; *CCR*, 1402-5, pp. 152-3; *CPR*, 1416-22, p. 265.

1410s and 1420s;²⁸ with Edmund Winter, who had held a fee from Norfolk's father and had acted as his attorney;²⁹ with Sir John Heveningham, who had served under the Mowbray banner at Agincourt;³⁰ and with Sir Robert Howard, who had married Mowbray's aunt between 1415 and 1420.³¹ The duke's difficulties were exaggerated by his inept handling of this situation. Castor has shown how he systematically alienated the few greater gentry whose lands bordered his own and who thus would have naturally turned to him for good lordship, at the same time vainly attempting to ally himself with anyone opposed to Suffolk, which left him in intermittent partnership with several rather unsavoury characters.³²

The rivalry between the dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk thus forms the overarching backdrop to the more immediate factionalism that developed amongst the Norfolk gentry. The steady rule of Erpingham and Beaufort had smoothed over whatever tensions inevitably bubbled to the surface in the litigious and largely self-serving world of late medieval gentry society. By 1450, however, Norfolk's gentry were far less united and the rule of the county was far less stable than it had been under the Beaufort-Erpingham circle. This was the world in which William Worcester lived at the time he was penning his *Boke of Noblesse*, and it was the local instability of this epoch that proved essential in moulding his perceptions of what was wrong with English genteel society.

Turning then to Worcester's personal experience of East Anglian society - scholarly interpretations of his 'lamentation', and indeed of his *Boke of Noblesse*, have paid particular attention to his close-knit relationship with Sir John Fastolf.³³ Such an approach has been pursued with good reason. Worcester was born in 1415, joined Fastolf's service in the late 1430s after studying at the University of Oxford,

²⁸ *CPR, 1413-16*, pp. 319-20, 333.

²⁹ Archer, 'The Mowbrays', pp. 209, 345.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

³¹ A. Crawford, 'The Career of John Howard, Duke of Norfolk, c.1420-85' (M.Phil, London, 1975), pp. 9, 12-13.

³² Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 120, 122-3, 172-4, 184.

³³ E.g. McFarlane, 'William Worcester', pp. 202-8; Richmond, *The Paston Family: Fastolf's Will*, pp. 77-80; Allmand and Keen, 'History and the Literature of War', pp. 92-105.

and continued to serve the irascible old knight until the latter's death in 1459.³⁴ During these years he performed a variety of duties for his master, proving himself a fastidious administrator of considerable talent. He held a few official posts in Fastolf's administration, notably acting as surveyor at Castle Combe, yet was of greatest use to his master as an unofficial private secretary.³⁵ It is very clear that Fastolf held Worcester in his deepest confidence. He sent him to France in order to collect evidence relating to a lawsuit stemming from the death of his nephew, Sir Robert Harling.³⁶ Worcester likewise assisted his master in rebutting the charge of cowardice laid against him by Lord Talbot after the battle of Patay, and he was additionally sent once again to France for a period of nine months to help straighten out the duke of Bedford's affairs after the latter's death.³⁷ His closeness to Fastolf is best demonstrated by the fact that he virtually acted as his employer's private physician in his final months, later asserting that he had spent ten years constantly by his side and had even regularly tended to the old knight's bodily functions.³⁸ The importance of Fastolf to Worcester is also evident in the latter's *Itineraries*, where Worcester regularly measures the passage of time by the number of years before or after Fastolf's death had occurred.³⁹

Although Worcester evidently remained by Fastolf's side the majority of the time, his fact-finding journeys were not limited solely to special missions across the Channel. He was dispatched all over England whenever his master required information relating to his landed wealth. As such, even though Fastolf was resident in London until 1454, Worcester would naturally have spent long months in East Anglia preparing his master's defence of his estates in the region; a fact reinforced by the survival of two rolls of travelling expenses.⁴⁰ There was certainly plenty of land to defend. Between 1415 and 1445 Fastolf spent £12,500 on properties in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, the bulk of which was purchased during the early 1430s, and

³⁴ McFarlane, 'William Worcester', pp. 202-4.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 202-3.

³⁶ Oxford: Magdalen College, *FP* 72 m. 9.

³⁷ Ibid., mm. 8, 7.

³⁸ Oxford: Magdalen College, *FP* 72 m. 7; McFarlane, 'William Worcester', p. 203.

³⁹ E.g. Worcester, *Itineraries*, p. 183.

⁴⁰ Oxford: Magdalen College, *FP*, 72 m. 8; McFarlane, 'William Worcester', p. 207.

several of which contained contested titles.⁴¹ Much of this had been acquired with little fuss however. Fastolf at that time was an esteemed Garter Knight, self-aggrandised, with considerable cash at his disposal.⁴² His aggressive purchasing schemes, though, eventually raised the ire of the earl of Suffolk, causing a rift between them that grew into a chasm as the 1440s wore on. Fastolf and the earl first bickered over the wardship of Fastolf's great-niece, the Harling heiress,⁴³ and this unpleasantness was aggravated by Fastolf's earlier purchase of the de la Pole manor of Cotton in Suffolk.⁴⁴ More generally, the swathe of territory Fastolf had acquired in the vicinity of Norwich indirectly threatened de la Pole influence in Norfolk. Later, Suffolk took Fastolf to court over the disputed manors of Drayton and Hellesdon, seemingly afflicting financial losses upon him,⁴⁵ while other Norfolk landowners, several with important de la Pole connections, followed suit and challenged Fastolf at every turn.⁴⁶ Indicative of Fastolf's deteriorating relationships with many of Norfolk's leading gentry was a letter he received in 1452 from his old wartime comrade, Thomas Lord Scales, who claimed that Fastolf had been not nearly as faithful and kind to him since their retirements as he had been in their fighting days across the Channel.⁴⁷ In light of these events Fastolf soon found himself at the forefront of the anti-Suffolk party in East Anglia, alongside John Mowbray, duke of Norfolk, and a handful of other prominent Norfolk gentry, most famously the Pastons, who were in dispute with Suffolk's followers, Tuddenham and Heydon.⁴⁸

⁴¹ Smith, 'Acquisition of Sir John Fastolf's East Anglian Estates', p. 137; 'Aspects of the Career of Sir John Fastolf', pp. 7-8.

⁴² McFarlane, 'The Investment of Sir John Fastolf's Profits of War', pp. 175-97.

⁴³ Smith, 'Litigation and Politics', pp. 64-5; 'Aspects of the Career of Sir John Fastolf', pp. 137-8; Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 146-7.

⁴⁴ Smith, "'The Greatest Man of That Age'", pp. 146, 150; Richmond, *The Paston Family: Fastolf's Will*, pp. 235-6; *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, ed. J. L. Kirby (London, 1995), xx, p. 268.

⁴⁵ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 148.

⁴⁶ E.g. The priory of Hickling; Suffolk's sister, Isabella Morley; Lady Bardolf, who had John Heydon in her pay; and the royal household officials, Sir Edward Hull and Philip Wentworth. Smith, 'Litigation and Politics', pp. 60-1; Smith, 'Aspects of the Career of Sir John Fastolf', pp. 192-202, 139-40, 181-4, 156-7, 204-7; Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 149-51; P. S. Lewis, 'Sir John Fastolf's Lawsuit over Titchwell 1448-55', *Historical Journal*, i (1958), 1-20.

⁴⁷ Oxford: Magdalen College, Hickling MS. 104.

⁴⁸ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 156-67. Their machinations are evident in the Paston Letters. E.g. *PL*, ed. Gairdner, ii, pp. 137, 189,

This seamy world of political intrigue was the one in which William Worcester lived as a member of Fastolf's household from the late 1430s onwards. At the time he was composing his *Boke of Noblesse* and harking back to the glory days of Crécy and Agincourt, those around him were, as he lamented, in courthouses seeking acquisitions and retribution by litigation, at the very moment when France was in the final throes of being lost forever. Worcester appears to have been a man with a fine sense of history. That he, and other East Anglian residents, were surrounded on all sides by written, oral and symbolic memorials to the seemingly cohesive and militarily triumphant period between 1350 and 1430 must be understood as integral to any interpretation of the 'lamentation of chivalry' and to any understanding of East Anglian military society in this later epoch. It is therefore to these memorials that one must now turn.

Memorialising East Anglia's Military Community: Perceptions Of The Recent Past

Proof of the martial prowess of the county's military community in earlier generations would have been everywhere apparent in the Norfolk of Worcester's day. Appreciation of feats of arms was common throughout the realm and we have already seen the fondness with which such feats were recalled by those gentry who spoke for Thomas Lord Morley and Sir Edward Hastings before the Court of Chivalry. Their words hint tantalizingly at the importance of word-of-mouth in spreading knowledge of Norfolk's local heroes. Men not only recounted chivalrous exploits they had witnessed, but also relayed hearsay and second-hand information, often prefaced in their testimony by a declaration that what they were about to impart was common knowledge.⁴⁹ Tales of crusading by Sir Hugh Hastings II, the performance at tournaments of the Lords Morley, and the deaths of Sir Hugh Hastings III and Robert Lord Morley on campaign, were all described in this fashion.⁵⁰ Such tales would have been related privately within family circles as well. A knight or esquire who had stood

233, 239; *PL*, ed. Davis, ii, pp. 47-8. After Suffolk's fall from power in 1449-50, Fastolf and his friends attempted to bring down Suffolk's followers, even drawing up an indictment against them, bearing the heading "These be names of men that arne myschevesly oppressed and wronged by Sir T. Tudenham and Heydon and here adherents". *PL*, ed. Davis, ii, p. 51; *PL*, ed. Gairdner, ii, pp. 216-17.

⁴⁹ J. T. Rosenthal has analysed this issue at length using the *Scrope v. Grosvenor* case before the Court of Chivalry. Rosenthal, *Telling Tales*, pp. 63-94.

⁵⁰ See Chapter Six.

arrayed before the gates of Paris in 1360 would surely have related this colourful moment to his children and grandchildren; those with crusading experience would have wanted to advertise their participation on so holy an enterprise; and mass spectatorship at lavish tournaments would have caused these spectacles to remain long in the collective memory of those who saw them.

There is no reason to believe that these oral traditions would not have continued into the following generations. Thus by the 1440s and 1450s younger men like William Worcester would have learned of the great deeds of their forebears from old men who had actually been there. In Worcester's case, of course, he possessed in Sir John Fastolf a font of first-hand information regarding the triumphant days of Henry V, and it certainly appears that Fastolf was not above self-promotion, for he proudly claimed to have been the first man ashore when the royal army landed at Harfleur in 1415.⁵¹ Worcester too was not the only gentleman likely to have been told such tales. We know from the fragments of his work, *The Ancient Families of Norfolk*, that he consulted his neighbour, Nicholas Bokking, whilst undertaking his research.⁵² Undoubtedly the stories told to Worcester and other men of his generation would have been romanticized, since over time the facts would have been "distorted by physical deterioration and nostalgia in old age, by personal bias, and by the influence of collective and retrospective versions of the past".⁵³ In this sense the glorious bygone days whose loss Worcester lamented were inevitably an idealised version of events, or at least a biased interpretation in which the triumphs remained prominent while the failures were allowed to recede into the background.⁵⁴

These oral traditions nonetheless implicitly reveal an awareness of local history among Norfolk's gentry. Respect for the faded warriors of generations past,

⁵¹ For Fastolf's military career, see Chapter Five.

⁵² In the heading for three of the different lists compiled by Worcester, Worcester described in a single sentence what the list was about and added 'relationem Nichi Bokking', Norwich: Norwich Public Library, MS. 7197, ff. 306, 309, 312.

⁵³ A. Thomson, 'Making the Most of Memories: The Empirical and Subjective Value of Oral History', *TRHS*, 6th Series, ix (1999), 291.

⁵⁴ For other important studies of oral tradition and memory, see M. J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1990); M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, second edition (Oxford, 1993); Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses: The Soldiers' Experience*.

for instance, was one of the principal motives behind Sir Thomas Erpingham's patronage of his window in 1419.⁵⁵ We know that William Worcester was one of those travellers through Norwich who perused the window in later years. In 1449 he made a list of the names of the knights commemorated upon it as part of his research for *The Ancient Families of Norfolk*.⁵⁶ This implies that it was for him a potent symbol of the region's chivalrous past that reinforced the veracity of the table-talk to which he had been privy in the company of his master, Fastolf. Perhaps too those esteemed names upon the window entered his thoughts when, in the coming years, he lamented the decline of chivalry in England.

Moreover, in light of those claims made by deponents before the Court of Chivalry that various events were common knowledge, one may suggest that the impressive careers of Norfolk's fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century military elite would have been well-known to many of their contemporaries and to the generations that followed. Numerous knights from the county had, after all, risen to high rank at court; several had become Garter Knights; a handful had even had their deeds recalled by the chroniclers of their day. Among the latter, Sir Robert Benhale's single combat prior to the battle of Halidon Hill, as we have seen, was documented by Geoffroi Le Baker.⁵⁷ The Westminster chronicler detailed the deaths of Sir Hugh Hastings III and Sir Thomas Morieux on John of Gaunt's Castilian expedition in 1388.⁵⁸ Thomas Walsingham outlined the events surrounding the Peasants' Revolt in Norfolk, during which Roger Lord Scales, William Lord Morley, Sir John Brewes, Sir Stephen Hales, and Sir Robert Salle had been apprehended by the rebels.⁵⁹ The French chronicler, Jean de Waurin, revealed the key role played by Sir Thomas Erpingham as leader of

⁵⁵ See Chapter Six.

⁵⁶ Norwich: Norwich Public Library, MS. 7197, ff. 304-5.

⁵⁷ *Chronicon Galfridi Le Baker*, ed. Thompson, p. 51.

⁵⁸ *The Westminster Chronicle 1381-1394*, ed. and tr. L. C. Hector and B. F. Harvey (Oxford, 1982), p. 191.

⁵⁹ *The Chronica Maiora*, tr. Preest, p. 145.

the archers at Agincourt.⁶⁰ Finally, several contemporaries praised Sir John Radcliffe for helping to save Calais from the Burgundians in 1436.⁶¹

Norfolk knights too, as has been noted, acquired important posts in royal service. When recounted collectively their achievements neatly sum up precisely why these men were held in such high regard by their descendants. Sir Thomas Morieux had been a knight bachelor of Edward III and later became a knight of the chamber to Richard II.⁶² Sir Nicholas Dagworth and Sir George and Sir Simon Felbrigg were likewise chamber knights of Richard's.⁶³ Richard's 'king's knights' included Sir Thomas Felton, Sir Stephen Hales, Sir Hugh Hastings III, Sir Edmund Noon, and Sir Edmund Thorpe II.⁶⁴ Sir Thomas Erpingham became chamberlain and steward of the royal household after the usurpation, while Sir John Strange became its controller.⁶⁵ Naturally, several other Norfolk knights with Lancastrian affiliations became household men under the new regime. These included Sir Robert Berney, Sir Thomas Geney and Sir Edward Hastings, while old Ricardians like Elmham, Noon, and the Felbriggs, continued their roles within courtly circles.⁶⁶

Additionally, of course, various Norfolk gentry held offices of national importance central to the conduct of the wars with France. Oliver Lord Ingham had been seneschal of Gascony;⁶⁷ Sir Thomas Felton became seneschal of Aquitaine;⁶⁸ Sir William Elmham served as governor of Bayonne and seneschal of Les Landes;⁶⁹ Sir Nicholas Dagworth became an international diplomat, overseeing treaties in Naples and Rome;⁷⁰ and Sir Thomas Erpingham, as we have seen, became one of the most

⁶⁰ *Chronicles by Waurin (1399-1422)*, tr. W Hardy and E. L. C. P. Hardy (London, 1887), ii, pp. 210-11.

⁶¹ R. Klinefelter, "The Siege of Calais": A New Text', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America*, lxvii (1952), 888-95; *Political Poems and Songs*, ed. Wright, ii, pp. 151-6.

⁶² TNA, E101/395/10; Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, p. 283.

⁶³ Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, p. 283.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 284-6.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 287-8.

⁶⁷ *CP*, vii, p. 58.

⁶⁸ Morgan, 'Sir Thomas Felton', *ODNB*, ix, pp. 286-7.

⁶⁹ *Catalogue des Rolles gascons*, ed. Carte, i, p. 161.

⁷⁰ *The Diplomatic Correspondences of Richard II*, ed. E. Perroy (London, Camden Soc., third series, xlviii, 1933), pp. 16, 48, 203, 210; TNA, C76/65 mm. 2, 4, 8.

powerful knights in early Lancastrian England, holding a host of influential positions.⁷¹ Later, Sir John Fastolf,⁷² Sir John Radcliffe,⁷³ Sir Robert Harling,⁷⁴ Sir William Oldhall,⁷⁵ and Sir John Clifton,⁷⁶ to name but a few, captained garrisons and governed conquered towns during their tenure in the English *pays*. In a purely military context too, it should be borne in mind that many of Norfolk's long-serving knights and esquires - the men who have been the protagonists of this study - were veterans of Crécy, Poitiers or Agincourt, the three landmark battlefield triumphs of the age.⁷⁷

Throughout these decades membership of the Order of the Garter was the ultimate attestation that a genteel warrior had achieved the pinnacle of his profession. Obviously elections to the Garter were shrouded by internal politics, but on the whole few men granted membership were blatantly undeserving, and the military records of the KGs of this epoch were mightily impressive and to some extent speak for themselves.⁷⁸ If one includes members of the regional nobility, like the Uffords and Mowbrays, then one finds that fifteen knights with Norfolk connections achieved Garter rank during the first eighty years of the Order's existence.⁷⁹ Magnates aside, these comprised experienced soldiers of the highest calibre, whose noteworthy careers in arms have already been elucidated.⁸⁰ In order of induction, they were Sir Miles Stapelton (1348), Sir Thomas Felton (1381), Sir Simon Felbrigg (1397), Sir Thomas Erpingham (1401), Thomas, fourth Lord Morley (1411), Sir William Phelip (1418), Sir John Fastolf (1426), and Sir John Radcliffe (1429). That the Order was first and foremost a military fraternity is made clear when one considers that three self-made soldiers in Stapelton, Fastolf and Radcliffe were elected, while other highly regarded,

⁷¹ See Chapter Two.

⁷² E.g. Worcestre, *Itineraries*, p. 353.

⁷³ E.g. 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1880), Appendix i, p. 713; TNA, C61/118 m. 9; E364/59 m. E.

⁷⁴ E.g. Paris: BN PO 1486 Harling 7; Paris: BN ms fr 26049/677 (cited from Curry, 'Database').

⁷⁵ E.g. *Wars of the English in France*, ed. Stevenson, ii, ii, p. 412

⁷⁶ E.g. 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1880), Appendix i, p. 683; 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1881), Appendix, p. 417.

⁷⁷ For their military records, see Appendix I.

⁷⁸ Collins, *The Order of the Garter*, pp. 34-85.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 289-94.

⁸⁰ See Chapter Five.

and higher born, Norfolk warriors, like Robert, second Lord Morley, Sir John Norwich, and Sir William Kerdiston II, were not. Moreover, admission was competitive with multiple knights recommended as potential members whenever a stall became vacant. As such, Radcliffe lost out to Fastolf in the election of 1426 and Sir William Oldhall was rejected in favour of Radcliffe three years later.⁸¹ In an age when English armies were largely triumphant and noteworthy deeds on the battlefield were widespread, anyone who achieved a Garter stall, especially if he were a mere knight, would have been able to hold his head up high, safe in the knowledge that he was amongst the most chivalrous and renowned soldiers in the realm.

William Worcester was well aware of the esteem attached to Garter membership. Besides the *Boke of Noblesse*, there survives a collection of his handwritten notes that essentially comprise fragments of his research materials for his lost antiquarian study, *The Ancient Families of Norfolk*.⁸² The fact that Worcester was preparing a work of that title itself illustrates his fascination for Norfolk's recent past. He later compiled a no-longer-extant biography of Sir John Fastolf,⁸³ which reinforces the high regard in which he held his master, and suggests that he was seeking to place Fastolf's achievements within the wider sphere of local deeds in arms, undertaken by the county's knightly elite of yesteryear. The fragments that survive from his *Ancient Families* are themselves telling and reveal much about Worcester's perception of Norfolk history.

Worcester catalogued the county's Garter Knights inducted during the reign of Henry V.⁸⁴ As already mentioned, he jotted down the names listed on Erpingham's window, and he additionally compiled a list of other knights from the region who had died without male issue in subsequent years.⁸⁵ He also recorded those local men-at-arms who had served in Normandy in recent decades, and perhaps most interestingly, he compiled a six-page list of those ancestors of noble and gentry families who had

⁸¹ G. F. Beltz, *Memorials of the Order of the Garter* (London, 1841), pp. lxiii-lxiv; Roskell, 'Sir William Oldhall', 94.

⁸² Norwich: Norwich Public Library, MS. 7197, ff. 297-313.

⁸³ McFarlane, 'William Worcester', p. 211; Hughes, 'Stephen Scrope and the Circle of Sir John Fastolf', p. 132.

⁸⁴ Norwich: Norwich Public Library, MS. 7197, f. 312.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, ff. 304-6.

entered England with William the Conqueror in 1066, underscoring his desire to portray his gentry in their broader context as the current progeny of ancient lineages. Moreover, as ever with Worcester, one may discern a heavily local flavour to his work, for in the final few pages of his notes he outlined the pedigrees of the Warennes, Cliftons, Calthorpes, Berneys and Pastons - the first dominant in the county prior to their extinction in 1347, the others important in Worcester's own time.⁸⁶ Worcester would certainly have been more interested in local history than most of his contemporaries, yet, as we have seen, knowledge of Norfolk's recent past, and especially an appreciation of the deeds in arms of the military community, appear to have survived through oral traditions and popular memory. As time passed, that popular memory would have increasingly mythologised these events, so that by Worcester's day the heroes of the Hundred Years War were perhaps even more esteemed through armchair discussion than they had been in their own lifetimes.

Finally, one further factor that abetted these oral traditions and enhanced the gentry's appreciation of their local military community must be considered. This was the prominence of heraldic imagery proudly displayed in churches and manor houses all over the county. It has already been emphasised how heraldic evidence was of central importance in the Morley and Hastings Court of Chivalry cases. As we have seen, testators recalled that Sir William Morley's coat armour had been placed in the parish church at Somerton; that Robert Lord Morley's military career was celebrated by the display of banners in public places after his death in France; and that the heart of a crusader Morley of the thirteenth century was buried in Reydon Church. Clerical deponents commonly described the depiction of the Morley arms on church windows throughout East Anglia and the judges in the *Grey v. Hastings* dispute adjourned to examine the incised brass tomb of Sir Hugh Hastings I.⁸⁷ Symbolism thus reflected an essential mode of memorialisation within Norfolk gentry society, as indeed it did amongst England's gentry on a national scale. A knight's heraldic device lay at the very heart of his sense of honour and familial pride and was the essential marker of his social status.⁸⁸ Many of Norfolk's more noteworthy warriors of yesteryear

⁸⁶ Ibid., ff. 307-11.

⁸⁷ See Chapter Six.

⁸⁸ Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*, pp. 9-24. See also A. R. Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1956).

consequently had themselves memorialised in a very tangible sense through architectural legacies. Providing an extra layer of meaning to these memorials, it should be borne in mind that, during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, the possession of coats-of-arms for the most part indicated that the knight or esquire in question had enjoyed a military career.⁸⁹ As such, armorial bearings displayed in family manors and chantries served to remind those who saw them that these families had likely been participants in the Hundred Years War and had proven themselves worthy of their armigerous status through their exploits with the sword.

As we saw in Chapter Three, beyond their own homes, local churches were similarly festooned with the arms of militarily-active families from the county, which usually served the dual purpose of advertising family alliances. Intermarried families would have their arms quartered, while arms displayed on the same window, or in the same religious establishment, generally indicated friendship between the families or common patronage of the church in question. The arms of the Sheltons and Uffords, for example, were erected in the church at Boyland's Manor;⁹⁰ the church of St John the Baptist in Garboldesham contained the arms of the Bardolfs, Howards, Scales', Felbriggs, Brothertons and Playses;⁹¹ and the Ufford, Morley and Kerdiston arms, as we have seen, were commemorated above the west door of Salle Church.⁹² Urban centres, being thoroughfares for the local gentry, naturally made suitable locations for advertising family connections. The Lords Morley, Bardolf and Scales, for instance, all had their arms displayed on the roof of Yarmouth Church, where any passer-by could admire them.⁹³ Similarly, the arms of knightly families, including the Hastings, Stapeltons, Cliftons and Ingloses, were displayed in Norwich Cathedral.⁹⁴ Larger religious houses too provided burial spaces for considerable numbers of county knights. Members of the families of Morley, Hemenhale, Hengrave, Geney and Gerbergh were buried in the Austin Friary in Norwich before 1430. There were

⁸⁹ See Chapters Six.

⁹⁰ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, p. 134.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, i, pp. 265-7.

⁹² Pamela-Graves, *The Form and Fabric of Belief*, p. 85.

⁹³ T. W. King, 'Ancient Shields in Yarmouth Church', *Norfolk Archaeology*, iii (1852), 73.

⁹⁴ H. Gurney, 'Arms in Norwich Cathedral', *Norfolk Archaeology*, iii (1852), 241-4.

Banyards and Carbonells buried in the Grey-Friars Church in Norwich,⁹⁵ and interred in the city's Carmelite priory were members of the Ingham, Morley, Groos, Banyard, Gerbergh, Barry and Calthorpe families.⁹⁶

Memorials like these evidently provided useful source materials for William Worcester. In his *Itineraries* (containing his hand-written memoranda from his journeys around England between 1477 and 1480), one may observe his knowledge of the *minutiae* of architectural design, especially his fascination for the grand old homes that stood as legacies of the past. In his travels around East Anglia, as well as in his visit to his native Bristol, Worcester recorded the details of numerous houses and churches that he passed. He often gave precise measurements in feet and displayed a keen interest in the layout of buildings.⁹⁷ Worcester well understood the link between architecture and history. In Yarmouth, for instance, he provided full descriptions of two of the town's more prominent churches, and additionally recorded such miscellanea as a list of the 'noble persons' who had died in the town, as well as describing various historical events that had taken place there.⁹⁸ In Norwich he visited the Austin Friary and copied down the names of those gentry listed in their calendar of martyrology.⁹⁹ He also provided the dates of death for numerous Norfolk gentry.¹⁰⁰ Lastly, as he had done in Norwich, he catalogued those nobles and gentry buried at St Benet Abbey at Hulme, as well as the names of those associated with the abbey.¹⁰¹

Scattered throughout the *Itineraries* too is a variety of random information concerning the English wars with France. Worcester listed several associates of Thomas Beaufort, as well as the followers of John, second Mowbray duke of Norfolk.¹⁰² He recorded Norfolk participants at the siege of Caen and at the battle of

⁹⁵ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, iv, pp. 109-11.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, iv, p. 417.

⁹⁷ Harvey, 'Introduction', *Worcester: Itineraries*, p. xv.

⁹⁸ These 'noble persons' comprised an assortment of prominent gentlemen and gentlewomen from the area, including, unsurprisingly, three members of the Fastolf family. Worcester, *Itineraries*, pp. 175, 179-81, 183, 185.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 237-9.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 245-7.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 221-3.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 355-61.

Verneuil in 1424.¹⁰³ His master, Fastolf, had won himself considerable renown at the latter encounter. In this vein, Worcester proudly related how Fastolf, Sir William Oldhall and Sir Andrew Ogard had all received promotions after the battle, and he detailed Fastolf's numerous offices in France.¹⁰⁴ On his travels too, he visited Ogard's and Oldhall's manor houses, describing their careers and the architectural grandeur of their residences.¹⁰⁵ In light of his *Itineraries*, his *Ancient Families of Norfolk*, his biography of Sir John Fastolf, and his *Boke of Noblesse* with its inferences of table-talk, one may perceive how local history, symbolic imagery, and word-of-mouth combined to provide William Worcester with a concise history of a seemingly glorious past that stood in stark contrast to the Norfolk of the 1450s in which he lived.

Since Worcester copied down the names on Sir Thomas Erpingham's window in 1449, it might prove telling at this juncture to consider a brief comparison between their respective outlooks, since both men in their own ways were fascinated by, and wished to commemorate, Norfolk's recent past. Put simply, Worcester had every reason to recall the reign of Henry V with a sadder heart than had Erpingham a generation earlier. At the time Erpingham was having his window constructed in 1419, Sir John Fastolf and many of his contemporaries were carving out profitable careers for themselves in what would soon become the English *pays*. When, three decades later, Worcester copied down the names on the window, the future would have appeared much bleaker. Fastolf was an elderly knight with relatively few friends, battling the machinations of the duke of Suffolk's affinity. Norfolk's other famous captains who had helped Henry V conquer France were by this time gradually dying off. Fastolf's nephew, Sir Robert Harling, had been killed defending St. Denis from the French in 1435.¹⁰⁶ Sir John Radcliffe had died in 1441,¹⁰⁷ followed to the grave in quick succession by Sir John Knyvett in 1445,¹⁰⁸ Sir John Clifton in 1447,¹⁰⁹ and Sir Henry Inglose in 1451.¹¹⁰ Fastolf, Sir Andrew Ogard and Sir William Oldhall

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 353, 3, 5.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 335, 353.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 47, 49, 51.

¹⁰⁶ McFarlane, 'William Worcester', p. 203.

¹⁰⁷ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 159.

¹⁰⁸ Virgoe, 'The Earlier Knyvetts', 3.

¹⁰⁹ *CP*, iii, p. 308.

¹¹⁰ *PL*, ed. Davis, i, p. 243.

were not long for this world either. All three were dead by 1460.¹¹¹ Through Fastolf, Worcester would have been personally acquainted with most of these men. He would very likely have heard their table-talk, as he had undoubtedly heard that of his employer. Consequently, their deaths, combined with the apparent apathy of the region's younger gentry for the French war, would in all likelihood have made him feel that the state of English chivalry during the 1450s was most assuredly lamentable.

This section has sought to explain why William Worcester perceived a decline of martial enthusiasm in East Anglia. Essentially, in his eyes, the knightly class of his own day compared poorly with their immediate predecessors. Yet throughout the Middle Ages contemporary authors regularly bemoaned the current state of chivalry and compared its present practitioners unfavourably with their forebears. Worcester's reasons for lamenting English chivalry might appear sound in the context of the loss of France and the oncoming Wars of the Roses, but if one wishes to understand how Norfolk's military community evolved after 1430, and how its knightly elite dealt with the limited military opportunities available to them, this later period must be examined on its own terms, rather than being held up in stark contrast to the days of Agincourt and Normandy. Armigerous culture was still vibrant during the mid-to-late fifteenth century, but without the military opportunities of earlier decades, the outlook of the knightly elite changed. How and why it changed forms the topic of our final section and enables us to place Norfolk's military community between 1350 and 1430 in its broader historical context.

The Evolution of Armigerous Culture, c. 1430-c. 1500

William Worcester was far from the only critic to bemoan the decline of chivalry in fifteenth-century England. Numerous writers of the age, including Nicholas Upton, Stephen Scrope, and Sir Gilbert Hay, offered their advice regarding the education and proper conduct of a knight, while William Caxton made his commitment to reinvigorating armigerous society apparent through the wide range of

¹¹¹ Harriss, 'Sir John Fastolf', *ODNB*, xix, p. 134; *CP*, iii, p. 308; Roskell, 'Sir William Oldhall', 110.

chivalric texts that passed through his printing press.¹¹² Caxton largely shared Worcester's sentiments. In the prologue preceding his translation of Ramon Lull's classic treatise, the *Book of the Order of Chivalry*,¹¹³ he advocated a return to good old-fashioned martial values, addressing himself to Richard III and imploring the king to "commaunde this book to be had and redde vnto other yong lordes knyghtes and gentylmen within this royaume, that the noble ordre of chyualry be hereafter better vsed".¹¹⁴ One of the root causes of England's current ills, as men like Worcester and Caxton perceived it, was that too few gentry hailing from armigerous families were in their day undertaking the military careers expected of men of their rank, and were rather pursuing their own selfish ends back at home.

Complaints such as these are commonly used by historians to support the idea that English martial enthusiasm truly was on the wane. From the perspective of the county gentry though, they could have done little else. There were compelling reasons that kept them at home during the latter stages of the Hundred Years War.¹¹⁵ For a start, the conflict was going badly for the English and the rewards on offer appeared scanty when compared to those acquired by the captains of Henry V's invasion forces. Any gentry who agreed to serve in France after the Treaty of Arras in 1435 would have, by and large, found themselves conducting a defensive war, under the command of grizzled war veterans whose hairs had been steadily graying as the landed wealth they had carved out in the English *pays* gradually evaporated before their eyes. For Norfolk's gentry too, the litigiousness of post-1430 society compelled many a prudent gentleman to remain at home guarding his estates. Military participation had always been a gamble, but even in the days of Crécy and Poitiers it had been a matter of weighing up the pros and cons. By the late 1430s, the cons far outweighed the pros.

¹¹² Nicholas Upton, *De Studio Militari*, ed. F. P. Bernard (Oxford, 1931); Stephen Scrope, *The Epistle of Othea to Hector*, ed. G. F. Warner (London, 1904); Gilbert Hay, *Gilbert of the Haye's Prose MS.*, ed. J. H. Stevenson, ii vols. (Edinburgh, Scottish Texts Society, 1901-14); Caxton, *The Epilogues and Prologues*, ed. Crotch.

¹¹³ *The Boke of the Ordre of Chyualry*, ed. A. T. P. Byles (London, EETS, Original Series, no. clxviii, London, 1926).

¹¹⁴ Caxton, *The Epilogues and Prologues*, p. 84.

¹¹⁵ For nationally-focused investigations of this issue, see Allmand, *Lancastrian Normandy*, pp. 241-67; Keen, 'The End of the Hundred Years War', pp. 239-55.

This nonetheless did not automatically imply that Norfolk's gentry were apathetic towards the war with France. For instance, when Cherbourg fell in 1449 the news was conveyed with dismay and considerable sadness in the Paston Letters.¹¹⁶ Even for those knights and esquires who did choose to remain in arms after the final defeat of the English at Castillon in 1453, there were precious few opportunities available for budding gentry soldiers. Outside of mercenary activity on the Continent, which was unlikely to win them a prominent place in chivalrous society, the only viable option for overseas service was garrison duty at Calais - England's last remaining outpost in France.¹¹⁷ As David Grummitt has recently shown, the Calais garrison was a largely professional force with a strong sense of camaraderie.¹¹⁸ Sir John Radcliffe had been lieutenant of the garrison during the crisis of 1436 - an office later held by two other Norfolk men, Sir Osbert Mundford in 1451, and John Lord Howard (the future duke of Norfolk) in 1471.¹¹⁹

Service at Calais evidently provided an opportunity for a young knight to prove his worth, to demonstrate that his arms were well-deserved, and to loosely place himself in the pantheon of local soldiers who had fought across the Channel. This is precisely what the Paston brothers, John II and Edmund, attempted to do. Both had improved their lot through favour at the court of Edward IV and Grummitt has suggested that positions at Calais were sometimes used as a means of patronage to reward the king's servants.¹²⁰ The Pastons' desire to prevent the duke of Norfolk from seizing Caister Castle had driven John II and III to fight for the Lancastrians at the battle of Barnet in 1471.¹²¹ Having found themselves on the losing side, service in the Calais garrison might have done much to restore their position in the eyes of the Yorkist court.

Regardless of their political motives, for *parvenus* like the Pastons, regularly strapped for cash and seeking to forget that their great-grandfather was a commoner, service at Calais offered them regular wages and the chance to acquire a much

¹¹⁶ *PL*, ed. Davis, ii, pp. 40-2.

¹¹⁷ Grummitt, *The Calais Garrison*, pp. 1-19.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-118.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 84, 69.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹²¹ Castor, *Blood & Roses*, p. 235.

sought-after military reputation that would add legitimacy to their newly-acquired armigerous status. If they remained out of favour at court, there existed the distinct possibility that their enemies might once again dredge up the issue of their common origins. Sir John Paston II joined the Calais garrison in mid-1473 and two years later wrote to Edmund informing him of a vacancy and encouraging him to “come hyddre and to be in such wagys as ye schall can lyve lyke a jentlyman”.¹²² Sir John’s desire to make a name for himself in the world of chivalry is palpably apparent in his letters, which are filled with enthusiasm during the preparations for Edward IV’s intended campaign of 1475, and resound with disappointment when the expedition came to nothing.¹²³ What is apparent from Sir John Paston’s time at Calais is the lack of opportunities for military service available to the gentry of his generation. Available theatres in which to test their mettle were few and far between, except in the internecine strife of the Wars of the Roses. With scant chance of seeing action in a truly chivalric setting, it is small wonder that so many gentry elected not to undertake a military career during these years.¹²⁴ There were more profitable ways to earn a living back at home. The question must therefore be asked: without the prospect of military service, how did Norfolk’s knightly class during this epoch maintain themselves as an armigerous, and supposedly chivalrous, elite?

One of the most obvious avenues through which the gentry’s interests in chivalric matters could be expressed was in the acquisition of books and miscellanies on the topic. Comparatively few book collections survive for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and many of those that have were owned by the higher nobility. Yet as Raluca Radulescu has recently reminded us, “gentry culture appropriated chivalric and political texts read by the nobility”.¹²⁵ Reading had become common practice within genteel society. The manuscript book trade expanded considerably

¹²² *PL*, ed. Davis, i, pp. 485-6.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, i, pp. 486-7.

¹²⁴ Military service under Yorkist or Lancastrian colours in the Wars of the Roses has deliberately been discounted. Although it afforded some gentry the opportunity to see action, the internecine nature of the conflict overshadowed any chivalrous deeds performed on the field, for the opposing forces were, in each other’s eyes, not evenly matched armies, but loyalists versus traitors. This perception is reflected in the executions of commanders and their lieutenants that followed the major battles of these wars. For a survey, see Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses: English Activity and Military Society*.

¹²⁵ Radulescu, *The Gentry Context*, p. 39.

during this era and men and women from all over the realm purchased written works and patronised authors, while often leaving books to their relatives in their wills.¹²⁶ Prominent gentry constantly dipped in and out of court, as business or bouts of royal favour brought them to London. They would consequently have been aware of the places where the nobility acquired their books and manuscripts and would have been in a position to grant commissions on their own account.¹²⁷ Examples of such collections survive sporadically.¹²⁸ Fortunately, at least three important Norfolk collections - those of Sir John Fastolf, Sir John Paston II, and John Lord Howard - have come down to us.¹²⁹ These, combined with evidence of literary patronage and book lending circles within the county, serve to illustrate the tastes of at least some of Norfolk's knightly families.

Within Norfolk, Sir John Fastolf was at the forefront of this vogue. He encouraged the literary appetites of his subordinates, and personally patronised and collected an extensive number of books, philosophical, political and chivalric.¹³⁰ In France, Fastolf had served John, duke of Bedford, whose passion for literature may be demonstrated in his purchase of the French Royal Library for 1,200 francs in 1425. This was later used as the basis for a library at Rouen, at a time when Fastolf was captain of the town.¹³¹ Some of the works in Fastolf's own library are known by title, having been catalogued when they were kept in the stew house at Caister Castle. These included a version of Vegetius' *De Re Militari*, entitled *Vege de larte Chevalierie*, a work by Livy, as well as a *booke of Jullius Caesar*, a *Brute in ryme*, a

¹²⁶ V. Harding, 'Cross-Channel Trade and Cultural Contacts: London and the Low Countries in the Later Fourteenth Century', *England and The Low Countries in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. C. Barron and N. Saul (Stroud, 1995), pp. 153-68; K. Harris, 'Patrons, Buyers and Owners: The Evidence of Ownership and the Role of Book Owners in Book Production and the Book Trade', *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475*, ed. J. Griffiths and D. Pearsall (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 163-99; C. M. Meale, 'Patrons, Buyers and Owners: Book Production and Social Status', *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475*, ed. J. Griffiths and D. Pearsall (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 201-38.

¹²⁷ Doyle, 'English Books In and Out of Court', pp. 163-81; M. J. Bennett, 'The Court of Richard II and the Promotion of Literature', *Chaucer's England: Literature in Historical Context*, ed. B. A. Hanawalt (Minneapolis, 1992), esp. pp. 3-7.

¹²⁸ Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, *passim*.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹³⁰ Hughes, 'Stephen Scrope and the Circle of Sir John Fastolf', pp. 129-34.

¹³¹ M. J. Barber, 'The Books and Patronage of Learning of a Fifteenth-Century Prince', *The Book Collector*, xii (1963), 308-18.

liber de Cronykes de Grant Bretagne in ryme, and the *Institutes of Justinian*. Fastolf also acquired French translations of Cicero's *de Senectute* and *Le Dicts Morlaux*.¹³²

His literary patronage was also wide-ranging. Fastolf was William Worcester's patron in all of the latter's literary endeavours prior to his death. During this period, Worcester translated, into English from a French version, Cicero's *de Senectute* (presented under the title of *Tullius of Olde Age*), which he had undertaken in his own words "by the ordenaunce desyr of the noble knight Syr Johan Fastolf", and which was later complemented by a further translation of Cicero's *de Amicitia*, printed by William Caxton in 1481 as *Tullius of Friendship*.¹³³ Worcester also firmly implied that Fastolf patronised the *Boke of Noblesse*, describing him as "mine autour".¹³⁴ Worcester too was certainly not the only gentleman in Fastolf's employ who produced written works at the old knight's behest. Stephen Scrope, Fastolf's stepson, composed translations of twin philosophical tracts, *The Epistle of Othea* in 1440 and *The Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers* in 1450.¹³⁵ An acquaintance of the Caister circle, Friar Brackley, purportedly put together a heraldic book of arms during the 1450s (although its author may in fact have been Judge William Paston's eponymous third son).¹³⁶ Lastly, another Fastolf employee, Geoffrey Spireling, made a copy of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*.¹³⁷

Moving away from Fastolf's immediate household, it becomes apparent that his taste for chivalric works, coupled with his desire to patronise literary endeavours, was common to other Norfolk gentry families, especially in the county's northeast, in the vicinity of Fastolf's Caister residence. Sir Miles Stapelton (d. 1466), whose family home at Ingham lay only a few miles north of Caister, was the patron of John Metham, a resident of Norwich and scholar of Cambridge, who produced a number of pseudo-scientific treatises during his career. He most famously wrote the chivalric

¹³² Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, pp. 145, 136; Hughes, 'Stephen Scrope and the Circle of Sir John Fastolf', p. 130.

¹³³ Hughes, 'Stephen Scrope and the Circle of Sir John Fastolf', p. 131.

¹³⁴ Worcester, *Boke*, pp. 16, 64.

¹³⁵ Hughes, 'Stephen Scrope and the Circle of Sir John Fastolf', p. 109.

¹³⁶ McFarlane, 'William Worcester', pp. 200, 222; N. Davis and G. S. Ivy, 'MS Walter Rye and its French Grammar', *Medium Aevum*, xxxi (1962), 110-24.

¹³⁷ J. M. Manly and E. Rickert, *The Text of the Canterbury Tales* (Chicago, 1940), i, pp. 183-8.

romance *Amorys and Cleopes* for Stapelton and his wife, Lady Catherine, in 1448-9.¹³⁸ Stapelton also commissioned a copy of Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*.¹³⁹ Sir John Paston II (d. 1479) was similarly inclined. During the 1460s and 1470s, he established an impressive library and a reputation as a book collector. In this period too, some nobles and gentry acquired so-called 'Grete Bokes' (chivalric miscellanies), and Paston, very likely inspired by the 'Grete Boke' of his fellow courtier, Sir John Astley KG, had one made for himself by his scribe, William of Ebesham.¹⁴⁰ Paston's 'Grete Boke' contained among other things the oath and ceremonies of the Knights of the Bath, a version of Vegetius' *De Re Militari*, and a copy of Lydgate's translation of the *Secreta Secretorum*.¹⁴¹ Moreover, an inventory taken at his death showed that he possessed such varied works as Cicero's *de Amicitia* and *de Senectute*, Stephen Scrope's *Epistle of Othea*, Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* and Chaucer's *Parlement of Fowles*.¹⁴² It is also clear from comments in the Paston Letters that a fair amount of book lending went on amongst the Pastons and their circle of friends.¹⁴³ Finally, simply to demonstrate that such modes of patronage and literary production were not confined to northeast Norfolk, it should be noted that William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk, and later John Lord Howard (the future duke of Norfolk) were both prominent literary patrons. A list of books taken by Howard on the Scottish expedition of 1481 has survived and included a copy of Honoré Bonet's *Arbre des batailles*, while de la Pole patronised widely and personally wrote at least six surviving poems in French.¹⁴⁴

Chivalric and political works were often produced with an educative agenda in mind. Caxton's prologue to the *Book of the Order of Chivalry*, as we have seen, was offered as reading material to the warrior class so that they could better understand

¹³⁸ S. Moore, 'Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk c.1450', *Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America*, xxvii (1912), 197-8.

¹³⁹ Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, p. 141.

¹⁴⁰ *Sir John Paston's 'Grete Boke'*, ed. Lester; Radulescu, *The Gentry Context*, p. 41.

¹⁴¹ Radulescu, *The Gentry Context*, p. 41.

¹⁴² Moore, 'Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk', 194; Lester, *Sir John Paston's Grete Boke*, 'Introduction'.

¹⁴³ *PL*, ed. Davis i, pp. 477-8, 516-18, 573-5. For a discussion of the Pastons' lending circle, see P. R. Coss, 'Aspects of Cultural Diffusion in Medieval England: The Early Romances, Local Society and Robin Hood', *Past and Present*, cviii (1985), 35-79.

¹⁴⁴ Moore, 'Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk', 202; Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, p. 145.

their expected duties as chivalrous men. Likewise the *Boke of Noblesse* called for the renewal of the war with France, advocating this step as a means of quelling the political instability that was currently plaguing the English realm.¹⁴⁵ That many nobles and knights maintained a keen interest in chivalrous conduct and rejoiced in the feats of arms of real and imagined heroes is clear from their enthusiastic patronage and purchase of such works. Sir John Paston II's career provides a fine insight into the perspective of the gentry elite of his generation. They were armigerous and schooled in arms, yet there were no wars to be fought. Consequently, their best bet was to learn the ways of war through the study of books, and to hone their skills through participation at tournaments and, when possible, garrison duty at Calais or elsewhere - the idea being that they would be ready when the time came. This explains Paston's excitement at the prospect of serving Edward IV in France in 1475. He finally had the chance to put all of his reading and training to good effect. The fact that the campaign petered out was consequently a source of grave disappointment to him.

Having said this, certainly not all gentry would have been spoiling for a fight or praying for the renewal of the Hundred Years War. Scholars are quite right in perceiving the evolution of armigerous culture away from its martial roots over the course of the fifteenth century.¹⁴⁶ Increasing numbers of men, who had never served in war nor ever aspired to, acquired armorial bearings during this period. Becoming armigerous was no longer strongly associated with military service, nor could it have been in an era when there were no real wars being fought. As such, the possession of arms became a matter pre-eminently of social status. Just as men-at-arms in the previous century had themselves memorialised on tombs, on church windows, and in the construction of elaborate manor houses, so too did their descendants after 1430. Indeed, heraldic architecture proliferated as the fifteenth century wore on, almost concomitantly with a decline in actual military participation.

A great many of Norfolk's surviving military brasses were produced during this later epoch, and one gains a sense that those who commissioned these works were

¹⁴⁵ Worcester, *Boke*, pp. 10-15. For the *Boke's* political message, see Allmand and Keen, 'History and the Literature of War', pp. 92-105.

¹⁴⁶ Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*, pp. 9-24.

seeking to publicly depict themselves as the direct heirs of the popular local military elite of earlier generations. Descendants of the knightly families of Curson and Berdewell, for example, commissioned military brasses after 1470, possibly suggesting that these younger knights were attempting to compensate for their own personal lack of achievements in war by focusing upon those of their families at large.¹⁴⁷ In an equally compensatory fashion, several of the region's grandest manor houses were built during the mid-to-late fifteenth century, by civilians as well as soldiers, often aping military architecture and creating a false impression of their owner's martial accomplishments. For instance, Sir Ralph Shelton (d. 1498) launched an extensive building programme, the pinnacle of which was the construction of the elaborate Shelton Hall at his family manor.¹⁴⁸ Wealthy lawyers were particular adherents to this vogue. Justice Roger Townshend added a brick tower and expanded various outbuildings on his property at East Raynham Old Hall. William Skipworth likewise enhanced his residence at Sowre Hall, while John Heydon, of Paston fame, oversaw the construction of his residence at Baconsthorpe Castle, complete with gatehouse, courtyard and moat.¹⁴⁹ Sir John Fastolf's magnificent castle at Caister was obviously an exception, in so far as it genuinely celebrated his war record.¹⁵⁰ However, one finds others covering their tracks very neatly. The best example of this may be John Wodehouse, the early Lancastrian royal administrator, who renovated his manor house at Kimberley, constructing an elaborate hall, surrounded by a moat, called Wodehouse Tower. Wodehouse's descendants appear subsequently to have peddled tales of their family's ancient knightly origins and did so with sufficient success that the eighteenth-century antiquarian, Rev. Francis Blomefield, genuinely believed that John Wodehouse had been a leading player at the battle of Agincourt, when in fact he had never taken part at all.¹⁵¹ This also reminds one of the popularity of genealogical research during the fifteenth century, a vogue, as we have seen, explored by William Worcester in his *Ancient Families of Norfolk*.

¹⁴⁷ *List of Rubbings of Brasses*, ed. Prior, pp. 1-8.

¹⁴⁸ J. Finch, 'Fragments of Ambition: The Monuments of the Shelton Family at Shelton, Norfolk', *Counties and Communities: Essays on East Anglian History*, eds. C. Rawcliffe, R. Virgoe and R. Wilson (Norwich, 1996), p. 91.

¹⁴⁹ A. Musson, 'Legal Culture: Medieval Lawyers' Aspirations and Pretensions', *Fourteenth-Century England III*, ed. W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 20-1.

¹⁵⁰ Hawkyard, 'Sir John Fastolf's 'Gret Mansion'', pp. 38-67.

¹⁵¹ B. Cozens-Hardy, 'Some Norfolk Halls', *Norfolk Archaeology*, xxxii (1961), 190; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, iv, p. 57.

Furthermore, the St George Guild at Norwich provided the perfect opportunity for Norfolk men to reach out and interact with the county's established armigerous elite.¹⁵² The guild was founded around 1389 and by the mid-fifteenth century possessed a host of proud warriors among its members, past and present. These included Sir Thomas Erpingham, Sir John Fastolf, Thomas Lord Morley, Sir John Clifton, Sir Henry Inglose, Sir Thomas Kerdiston, Sir William Phelip, Sir Thomas Tuddenham and William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk.¹⁵³ It was not a military order, but it maintained elements of pseudo-chivalric pageantry, including a feast day and an elaborate public procession accompanied by an abundance of theatre.¹⁵⁴ Through their membership of this guild, assorted civilian gentry, of whom there were many members, were able to parade side-by-side with seasoned veterans of the Hundred Years War. By 1471 there were 217 members and, importantly, these included descendents of numerous knightly families, including the Heveninghams, Geneys, Stapeltons and Calthorpes, who would have been able to process through the streets in the same manner as their more illustrious ancestors had done in earlier decades.¹⁵⁵ Norfolk's knightly elite after the close of the Hundred Years War thus appears to have gone out of their way to advertise themselves as the heirs apparent to the veterans of Crécy, Poitiers and Agincourt. The problem for many was that they had precious few chances to prove themselves as warriors of comparable renown.

Finally, the nature of armigerous culture in Norfolk, both in the militarily-active decades before 1430 and in the period following it, must be understood in the broader context of chivalric practices at the national level. Gentry all over the realm collected and patronised chivalric literature, joined guilds, and undertook building schemes proudly displaying their coats-of-arms and their ancient lineages.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² *Records of the Gild of St George, Norwich, 1389-1547*, ed. P. Millican, tr. and intro. M. Grace, v (Norwich, ix, 1937).

¹⁵³ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, iv, p. 349.

¹⁵⁴ *Records of the Gild*, ed. Millican, pp. 16-18.

¹⁵⁵ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, iv, p. 350.

¹⁵⁶ See below. See also, *Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200-1400*, eds. J. Alexander and P. Binski (London, 1987); Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales*; N. Saul, *Death, Art, and Memory in Medieval England: The Cobham Family and their Monuments 1300-1500* (Oxford, 2001); Saul, 'Bold as Brass', pp. 167-93; Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman*.

Readership circles, like those around Sir John Fastolf, have similarly been uncovered sporadically at the county level in a variety of locales.¹⁵⁷ Moreover the dearth of military opportunities after 1430 was, of course, a national phenomenon, while most regions faced political instability at one time or another during the Wars of the Roses.¹⁵⁸ Events in Norfolk, as described in this chapter and the one preceding it, were far from unique.

Importantly, in the national context, one must stress the significant role played by England's monarchs and higher nobility in facilitating the full flowering of English chivalry from the early fourteenth century, and in encouraging the literary, symbolic and architectural movements prevalent in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Successive sovereigns deliberately cultivated a chivalric persona to suit their own political ends and indeed all of the kings of our period may justifiably be perceived as chivalrous men in their own right. Edward III famously acquired an international reputation in the wake of his victory at Crécy and hosted some of the most spectacular chivalric pageants of the fourteenth century, in so doing deliberately exploiting the cult of King Arthur and utilising Arthurian imagery in his building projects, and in his feasts and tournaments.¹⁵⁹ Further evidence of the chivalric bent of the royal court may be found in the surviving issue rolls of Edward's reign up to 1344. These reveal his possession of 160 books, 59 of which were *libri de romanciis*, which were distributed liberally within courtly circles amongst his friends and kin.¹⁶⁰ Additionally, Edward's successful exploitation of the ideals of chivalry reached its apogee with his creation of the Order of the Garter in 1348; a measure which

¹⁵⁷ E.g. P. W. Fleming, 'The Hautes and their 'Circle': Culture and the English Gentry', *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. D. Williams (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 85-102.

¹⁵⁸ Allmand, *Lancastrian Normandy*, pp. 241-67; Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses: Military Activity and English Society*.

¹⁵⁹ M. J. Bennett, 'Isabella of France, Anglo-French Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange in the Late 1350s', *The Age of Edward III*, ed. J. S. Bothwell (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 215-25; Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry*, pp. 42-91; *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England*, eds. Coss and Keen; A. K. McHardy, 'Some Reflections on Edward III's Use of Propaganda', *The Age of Edward III*, ed. J. S. Bothwell (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 171-92; M. H. Keen, 'Chivalry and Kingship in the Later Middle Ages', *War, Government and Aristocracy in the British Isles, c.1150-1500: Essays in Honour of Michael Prestwich*, eds. C. Given-Wilson, A. Kettle and L. Scales (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 258-60.

¹⁶⁰ Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry*, p. 49.

elaborated upon the spirit of his earlier tournaments, binding his leading warriors to him by inspiring among them a strong sense of *esprit de corps*.¹⁶¹ Like Edward, Henry V displayed the dual qualities of good government and chivalrous conduct, while his triumph at Agincourt and conquest of Normandy won him an edifying place in the hearts of his contemporaries and in the minds of future generations, who looked back nostalgically at his reign and compared it favourably with the discord of his son's.¹⁶² It should be noted too that Henry IV, despite the civil strife of his reign and the ill health that dogged his final years, nonetheless was fondly recalled for the crusading exploits of his errant youth. Indeed, upon his accession, he was glowingly described in *Mum and the Sothsegger* as:

a comely knygt y-come of the grettest,
Ful of al vertu that to a kyng longeth¹⁶³

It was perfectly understandable that England's monarchs should have sought to portray themselves as chivalrous individuals and to seek to prove the point by leading their subjects into battle. It was, after all, the image of the warrior king that caught the popular imagination of later medieval writers. Few authors doubted the historicity of Arthurian legend and English national history was to them a series of heroic episodes revolving around the exploits of the protagonist. The author of the *Gesta Henrici Quinti*, for example, placed Agincourt in the broader context of English providence, claiming it as the third divine judgment in favour of the English, following on from those at Sluys and Poitiers.¹⁶⁴ So history could be written as a single strand, from the triumphs of King Arthur, to those of William I, to those of Richard I, then on to Edward I, Edward III and Henry V. Indeed it was this tradition of national conquest that William Worcester tried to capture in his *Boke of Noblesse*. He opened a section dedicated to a chronological account of English battlefield victories with the heading "how many worthie kynges of this land have made gret

¹⁶¹ Beltz, *Memorials of the Order of the Garter*; Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry*, pp. 76-91; Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III*, pp. 105, 116-17; Collins, *Order of the Garter*, pp. 187-233.

¹⁶² Allmand, *Henry V; Henry V: The Practice of Kingship*, ed. Harriss.

¹⁶³ *Mum and the Sothsegger*, ed. M. Day and R. Steele (London, EETS, Original Series, cxcix, 1936), p. 33.

¹⁶⁴ *Gesta Henrici Quinti*, ed. F. Taylor and J. S. Roskell (Oxford, 1975), p. 123.

conquests in ferre contrees".¹⁶⁵ It was in the footsteps of these warrior kings that Worcester hoped Edward IV would follow when he presented him with his *Boke* prior to the campaign of 1475.

Edward and many at his court, including Sir John Paston II, actively participated in the twin vogues of architectural design and the collection, patronage and dissemination of 'Grete Bokes' and other chivalric literature. Indeed it was Edward who originally founded the Royal Library and who modelled his own court on that of his Burgundian in-laws, with the intention of bolstering the chivalric reputation of his young regime.¹⁶⁶ Finally, in like fashion, it should be noted that Henry VIII, the last English sovereign schooled in arms in the medieval style, was similarly determined to uphold these martial traditions. He displayed tremendous aptitude for the joust, attempted to revive the war with France in 1513, and patronised Lord Berners' editions of the Froissart chronicles.¹⁶⁷ From Berners' introduction, one may glean that Henry too understood his place in the history of English conquest, for Berners commented that "his Highness taketh singular pleasure to behold how his worthy subjects, seeing in history the very famous deeds [of] their valiant ancestors, contend by vigorous virtue and manhood to follow, yea to pass them if they may".¹⁶⁸ For the kings of England throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a chivalrous reputation and military triumphs proved vital ingredients in establishing their reputations as purveyors of good kingship, of the type outlined by the many authors of Mirrors of Princes. In an epoch that prized martial prowess, the armigerous elite prior to 1430 had every opportunity to live up to these expectations, while their descendants in the later fifteenth century found themselves interminably cast in a dimmer light, overshadowed by their more illustrious forebears.

¹⁶⁵ Worcester, *Boke*, p. 9.

¹⁶⁶ Radulescu, *The Gentry Context*, pp. 40-7; Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, pp. 12, 96-7, 127, 130, 154, 172; J. Backhouse, 'Founders of the Royal Library: Edward IV and Henry VII as Collectors of Illuminated Manuscripts', *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. D. Williams (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 23-41; A. R. Myers, *The Household of Edward IV* (Manchester, 1959), pp. 3-4, 18-19, 33-4; Ferguson, *The Indian Summer of English Chivalry*, pp. 153-8.

¹⁶⁷ S. J. Gunn, 'Tournaments and Early Tudor Chivalry', *History Today*, xli (1991), 15-21; Orme, *From Childhood To Chivalry*, pp. 23, 30, 18, 23-4, 103, 155, 190, 200, 204, 206, 209; Ferguson, *The Indian Summer of English Chivalry*, pp. 158-62.

¹⁶⁸ Froissart, *Chronicles*, ed. Berners, iv, pp. 3-4.

Conclusion

So what conclusions may be drawn about the changing character of Norfolk military society during the later fifteenth century? Ostensibly, Norfolk's 'military community' lost much of its cohesion because the 'county community' was coming apart at the seams over the course of the 1430s and 1440s. At the same time, however, the conduct of the war with France itself undermined local military society in the county. Norfolk's hardened professional soldiers remained abroad for years at a time, falling out of touch with the world of their native locality. Concomitantly, with the war turning against the English, fewer Norfolk men were prepared to cross the Channel and take up arms in the king's name. These declining rates of military participation were exacerbated after 1453, by which time there were precious few options available to the aspiring warrior gentry. Primarily due to their lack of active military service, the armigerous gentry were consequently becoming detached from the warrior lifestyle that had won them their armorial bearings in earlier times. The line between knight and esquire had essentially blurred and increasing numbers of civilian gentry (especially lawyers, merchants, and civic officials), as well as numerous *parvenus*, were acquiring coats-of-arms. Because the possession of arms implicitly reflected genteel status, those of common stock or no military background fabricated pedigrees attesting to their ancient gentility and the spurious martial prowess of their ancestors.

These broad facts are well known and were national phenomena. What is most important for our purposes, however, is the way these altering circumstances affected chivalric culture in the Norfolk area. The contrast was drawn in the previous chapter between the testimonies of the military and civilian gentry who spoke before the Court of Chivalry. It was highlighted that while the latter described tournaments and pageantry, and furnished the Court with heraldic evidence, the former, more often than not, simply related matter-of-factly the occasions when they had seen the disputed arms borne on campaign or in battle. Morley's and Hastings' civilian deponents had no practical knowledge of military service. What they knew about the world of chivalry was its literature - chivalric manuals, romances and chronicles - and its heraldic architecture, which shone brightly in their localities and advertised the armigerous status of their neighbouring greater gentry.

What this chapter suggests is that, by the later fifteenth century, the direct descendants of Norfolk's Edwardian and early Lancastrian military elite were themselves as out of touch with the warrior lifestyle as had been the civilian gentry who spoke before the Court of Chivalry in 1386-7 and 1407-10. Most of Norfolk's later fifteenth-century knights and esquires, whose ancestors had served as men-at-arms in the Hundred Years War, had never seen action themselves. Consequently, they did what they could. Many would still have been schooled in arms from a young age. They would have known how to ride and fight and might very well have participated in domestic and international tournaments. Yet most had never seen the battlefields of France, and one gains a sense that some, at least, felt that they had not lived up to the memory of their seemingly heroic ancestors. Certainly William Worcester felt this to be the case. His master, Fastolf, had campaigned for forty years. The Norfolk gentry of Worcester's generation, by contrast, might have seen occasional garrison duty if they were lucky. That they patronised, collected and read chivalric literature was educative and admirable, but the proof of their prowess was in the fighting, and after 1453 there was precious little of that, beyond internecine strife between Yorkists and Lancastrians.

CONCLUSION

When concluding his study of Cheshire's military community, Philip Morgan asserted that "war remained a commonplace element in the lives of the Cheshire gentry in the later middle ages, part indeed of the 'totality of human experience'".¹ This was palpably not the case in the more peaceable climes of East Anglia. With the exception of the occasional cross-Channel invasion scare, Norfolk's gentry never found war encroaching directly upon their daily lives, and those who sought the soldiers' experience had to travel well beyond the borders of their native shire to find it. Principally for this reason Norfolk's warrior gentry have received minimal scholarly attention over the years. With the notable exception of Sir John Fastolf, the shire's military elite has been perceived almost exclusively as landowners, as local politicians, as intermediaries between the nobility and the lesser gentry, and as prominent families who represented good catches on the marriage market. Issues such as these have formed the key themes of most analyses of 'bastard feudalism' and have encouraged social historians to focus upon specific counties and regions as individual geographical entities, in which their gentry protagonists are only important players as long as they are living within the confines of their county. What the greater gentry in most county histories did outside of their shire is rarely touched upon. It is in the military sphere that the limitations of this approach are most apparent, for soldiering represented the greatest drain of manpower from the provinces, and provided the first, and often the only, opportunity for the county gentry to see a world far beyond the borders of their native locality.

One cannot adequately investigate the careers of great knightly landowners simply by focusing upon their domestic concerns within the shire. Although the maintenance of their landed estates, the acquisition of suitable marriage partners, participation in local government, and the preservation of law and order, may collectively be considered the issues that preoccupied their daily lives, these individuals were nonetheless trained for the martial lifestyle and almost without exception experienced the horrors and triumphs of warfare at some point. Many campaigned regularly - albeit intermittently - in the king's wars, and their success or

¹ Morgan, *War and Society in Medieval Cheshire*, p. 227.

failure on these expeditions, as well as their military experiences more generally, naturally shaped their attitudes and actions to some degree. A medieval soldier could no more slip seamlessly between a war zone and civilian life than his modern-day counterpart, and to examine the knightly elite wholly in their domestic context, as most county histories do, is surely to leave the glass half full. When considering the political world of Norfolk society between 1350 and 1430, it becomes apparent that most of those knights and esquires who stood at the forefront of magnate affinities, and who acted as peace commissioners, sheriffs and M.P.s, were for the most part men of martial experience. The intention of this study has consequently been to highlight the interplay between the military and civilian interests of the warrior gentry, especially the knightly elite, whose role in shire government was much more direct than their lesser gentry contemporaries, and who constantly needed to balance their domestic duties with their martial vocation.

In the world of the shire, Norfolk's knightly elite (as elsewhere throughout the realm) comprised the foremost families in their immediate locality. Some were important figures on a regional, East Anglian scale, while others were merely the pre-eminent lords of their particular parish or hundred. These families broadly shared the same immediate priorities. They needed to tend to their estates, profit from their agricultural produce or from animal husbandry, and find dependable men - stewards, bailiffs, lawyers, accountants, and the like - to protect and oversee their landed wealth. Their tenants looked to these greater gentry as their natural lords and the latter in turn needed to command the 'worship' of those who lived on their estates and in their vicinity. To command worship, the greater gentry had to dress and act the part and maintain an income and lifestyle greater and more opulent than their lower-born neighbours, thereby confirming that in the most local of contexts they were men worthy of respect. A sense of crude class-consciousness paralleled this vertical tie, and an element of one-upmanship undoubtedly saw knightly neighbours on occasion attempt to out-do each other in the expense of their clothing, the splendor of their manor house, or the lavishness of their banquets when they wined and dined their friends and associates. Within this broad array of networks that loosely united the county elite, there simultaneously prevailed more intimate associations - networks within networks - within which, as we saw in the case of the Morley and Erpingham circles, longstanding solidarities and friendships could flourish.

Alongside these basic issues of style, deportment and shared economic interests, the greater gentry also needed to maintain their family's honour and reputation, and for the knightly class this could most efficiently be achieved by acquiring personal status in the world of chivalry. War was the natural and expected vocation of the knightly elite, and while few men realistically expected a wealthy knight to dedicate his professional life to a career in arms, it was certainly popularly understood that armigerous society as a whole was required to support their sovereign in his wars and to actively participate on royal and ducal expeditions. Many of Norfolk's knightly elite in the mid-fourteenth century could count among their ancestors men who had helped Edward I conquer Wales, defend Gascony, and hammer the Scots, so in this sense family tradition and the desire to live up to the good name of their predecessors played a vital role in compelling generation upon generation of Norfolk knights to serve in France from the days of Crécy and Poitiers, right through to the conquest and defence of Normandy in the 1420s. In this fashion, one may starkly perceive the dual role expected of Norfolk's knightly elite, as landowners and leaders of their locality, but also as soldiers with their families' chivalric reputations to defend.

While political society has not been the focus of this study, it is nonetheless fair to say that the Norfolk gentry in this epoch lived lives of comparative independence, relatively unhampered by intra-gentry factionalism or the over-mighty lordship of the higher nobility. Numerous magnates possessed a landed stake in East Anglia, but only the earls (later dukes) of Suffolk and Norfolk may be considered permanent residents of the region. For Norfolk's gentry, prior to the feuding that occurred between the de la Poles and Mowbrays - so vividly brought to life in the Paston Letters - the shire's nobility were essentially concerned with mining the area for competent estate officials, talented lawyers who would offer them counsel and defend their lands, and martially-inclined knights and esquires who would help fill out their retinues in time of war and offer them advice and administrative service at home. It was naturally also assumed by these great lords that these militarily-active greater gentry would appear at muster accompanied by lesser gentry and commoners from their own locality, thereby providing a healthy East Anglian contingent for a lord whose direct influence over the eastern counties was limited. Such service provided a

well-worn career path for Norfolk's greater gentry and the majority of those men who may be considered the county's elite between 1350 and 1430 had maintained or acquired their positions of prominence in part at least on the back of lordly patronage.

What the nobility's role in Norfolk society suggests is that one must be wary of perceiving a lordly presence in the localities as an unwanted intrusion, and also, that studies of lord-gentry socio-political relations at the shire level must take into account the military dimension involved in these relationships. Men who served in a lord's military retinue were not simply proverbially added to the list of gentry loyal to that lord. Acquiring regular military followers was not particularly a political matter at all - at least not in Norfolk. True, there were some Norfolk knights and esquires who saw all, or most, of their military action under the one noble banner, and who simultaneously offered their lord peacetime service as well. But there were others who fought regularly under the one lord but maintained no peacetime connection with his house at all, others who moved between the retinues of nobles who were each other's friends or kin, and others still who switched from one noble retinue to the next, serving whichever commander offered them the best deal. Service in magnate affinities represented an important form of employment and potential career advancement for Norfolk's warrior gentry, but for many soldiers, especially full-time military participants, the nobility were perceived essentially as little more than the largest-scale military recruiters in the realm, and, as such, regular military followers quite often had no political connection with their longstanding noble commander.

The age of the Hundred Years War naturally provided Norfolk's gentry with a host of opportunities to see military action during their careers. The wars with France continued at intervals throughout the period, and beyond these campaigns, occasional expeditions were launched into Scotland, Ireland and Spain, while mercenary activity on the continent beckoned many a professional soldier during periods of truce. Garrison duty could provide ongoing wages for the full-time soldier in between campaigning seasons, and after the conquest of Normandy from 1417, even the knightly elite became active in this type of employment, commanding garrisons and captaining captured castles and towns. Norfolk's gentry participated in all of these forms of military service and, in large measure due to the size and dense population of

the shire, it naturally provided a healthy body of gentry soldiers on almost every major expedition of the era.

In practice, however, there was a world of difference between the experiences of a full-time career soldier, seeking to live from the wages and profits of warfare, and the attitude of a great knightly landowner, for whom military service was only one aspect of his life and was certainly not a full-time vocation. Almost without exception Norfolk's knightly elite campaigned at least occasionally and many of them did so regularly. Yet a clear distinction must be drawn between these two types of service. Professional soldiers were forever in search of their next wage. That is why such men combined participation on government-sanctioned royal and ducal campaigns, with overseas and domestic garrison duty, and in some instances with mercenary activity on their own account. It is also for this reason that most full-time career soldiers were either lesser gentry - the sort of poorer knights and esquires who spoke for Thomas Lord Morley before the Court of Chivalry - or were what are often labeled 'landless' younger sons, like Sir Thomas Felton, looking to make their way in the world. For the established knightly elite, possessing significant territorial interests in their native shire and beyond, going to war was a decided gamble. A ransom might ruin even the most prosperous family and the sudden death on the battlefield of a family's head might engender a minority crisis, a disputed inheritance, or even the dispersal of the family fortune into the hands of heiresses. Nonetheless, regardless of whether they served continuously in war, or at regular intervals, it is clear that many Norfolk warriors campaigned vigorously over long stretches of time, and sometimes for more than two or three decades.

The victories of Crécy and Poitiers, and later Agincourt, naturally instilled in the English gentry a strong sense of patriotic pride. At the same time, regional societies throughout the realm could delight in their own locality's contribution to the expeditions of this era. The militarily-active testators who spoke on behalf of the Morleys and Hastings before the Court of Chivalry revealed themselves to be among the most active warriors in East Anglia - the inner core of East Anglian military society. They described matter-of-factly the campaigns on which they had served and occasionally noted moments when a Morley or Hastings had behaved chivalrously. Few were connected by ties of tenure or kinship with either family, and the number of

fellow Lancastrians who spoke for the Hastings merely reminds one of John of Gaunt's importance as a military commander and as a recruiter of soldiers. There was no pressure brought to bear for Lancastrians to defend the Hastings, and most who spoke for the family may rather be considered the boon companions of Sir Hugh Hastings II and III, who came together in 1407 to recall the exploits of their youth. In these two cases, the solidarities of regional military society, at its inner core, are fully laid bare. The experienced knights and highly militarily-active esquires who spoke on Morley's and Hastings' behalf were essentially going to great lengths to defend the arms - and thus the family honour - of notable warrior families from their own region, whose members had served chivalrously alongside them in war, and who, from their perspective, undeniably deserved to maintain their arms.

In this context, esteemed local knights who served in the king's wars intermittently over many years, and lesser gentry soldiers who made war their full-time vocation, may be considered the leaders of East Anglia's 'military community'. It was a community with no definable boundaries, nor official members, and membership derived from a warrior's martial prowess, rather than from his economic or social status within the domestic world of the shire. It was in this light that lowly esquires, who hardly survive in other military records for individual campaigns, were able to speak confidently before the Court of Chivalry in defence of families of far greater social rank. The Court of Chivalry represented the world of the soldier, and within its confines what long-standing military participants of all genteel ranks had to say was evidently considered worthy of attention.

If Norfolk's warrior gentry were part of a broadly East Anglian 'military community', which in turn was part of the vibrant English military scene established under Edward III and reinvigorated under Henry V, then the decline of English military fortunes from c. 1430 onwards could not help but undermine the cohesion and sense of purpose evident amongst Norfolk gentry soldiers of earlier generations. The gamble of military service looked increasingly unlikely to pay off as the 1430s progressed, and by the 1440s the tide of war had definitively turned in favour of the French. A clear division had anyway developed after the conquest of 1417 between the active soldiers in the English *pays*, who had made their careers from French spoils and had everything to lose were the English defeated, and those who remained at

home throughout this period and who became increasingly detached from the ongoing saga of defence and counterattack that characterised the English war effort in its final phase. It is against this backdrop that men like William Worcester criticised the apparent lack of interest in war shown by the traditional knightly class in English society. Yet, perceived from a regional, Norfolk perspective, the average knightly landowner of this later generation faced something of a quandary. His political world was far less peaceable than had been the case prior to the deaths of Thomas Beaufort and Sir Thomas Erpingham in the late 1420s. The dukes of Suffolk and Norfolk were actively in dispute with each other and factionalism was developing in the county as had not been seen for decades. It was, therefore, less easy for men to simply sign up for overseas service, leaving their estates vulnerable to the potential machinations of their neighbours in this newly volatile atmosphere. Additionally, since war had always been a gamble, even in the tremendously successful reigns of Edward III and Henry V, there was now relatively little incentive for a Norfolk knight to cross the Channel. The chances of acquiring spoils and ransoms appeared limited in light of the French *revaunche*; castles and garrisons were being lost rather than won in these years; and the style of warfare had changed from the earlier profitable lightning raid to a longer-term commitment, which most greater gentry were not prepared to meet.

Against this backdrop, one may discern amongst Norfolk's knightly elite a sense of disappointment with their circumstances, and perhaps also with themselves personally. They were the heirs - in rank, if not always in lineage - of the chivalrous warriors of Crécy, Poitiers, Agincourt and the Normandy conquest, yet it seemed that their generation would be the one to lose all that their forebears had acquired. The Erpingham Window, the Norfolk and Suffolk Roll of Arms, and the considerable number of fourteenth-century manor houses and brass tombs scattered throughout the region indicate quite starkly that there was to be found everywhere reminders of Norfolk's proud military past. Additionally, there still lived in the county veterans of Agincourt and the Normandy invasion who were doubtless held in the highest regard by the next generation, but whose mighty achievements would have appeared impossible to match, especially with contemporary authors, like William Worcester, drawing stark and unfavourable comparisons between the two.

In light of these circumstances, Norfolk's gentry appear to have done what they could. They continued to train for war, attend tournaments, participate in jousts and melees, maintain their knowledge of heraldry and chivalrous protocol, and collect romance literature and chivalric manuals. This, however, more closely resembled the mental world inhabited by the civilian testators in the *Lovel v. Morley* Court of Chivalry dispute in the 1380s. What Norfolk's mid-fifteenth century soldiers lacked was a viable military theatre in which to test their mettle, and to put their reading, training, and other acquired knowledge into practice. Between 1350 and 1430 Norfolk's knightly elite were at their most respected, their most successful, and their most militarily-active. After the latter date, theirs was essentially a legacy that their later fifteenth-century successors found impossible to live up to.

APPENDIX I: BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES¹

The Lords Bardolf

of Wormegay

The Bardolfs were well-established in Norfolk by the reign of Edward I.² John, third Lord Bardolf (1312-1363), succeeded his father in 1328.³ He was active as a peace commissioner and a commissioner of array in Norfolk over many years and participated in Edward III's wars, serving in Scotland, Germany and France.⁴ His son, William, fourth Lord Bardolf (1349-1386), campaigned intermittently in France and Ireland, and headed numerous judicial commissions during the 1370s and early 1380s.⁵ Thomas, fifth Lord Bardolf (1369-1408), however, brought about the collapse of his family's dynasty. He served Richard II in Ireland in 1399, and, although he made subjection to Henry IV, he nonetheless joined the Percy rebellion against King Henry, after which he fled to Scotland, was declared a traitor, and forfeited his family's estates. In 1408, still on the run, he died from his wounds following the battle of Bramham Moor in Yorkshire, after which his remains were quartered and his head placed atop the gates of Lincoln.⁶ His daughter, Joan, married Sir Thomas Erpingham's nephew, Sir William Phelip of Dennington (Suff.), who was eventually raised to the peerage as Lord Bardolf in 1437.⁷

Sir Robert Benhale

of Benhale

A prominent soldier during the early years of Edward III's reign, Benhale was recalled by the contemporary chronicler, Geoffroi Le Baker, for his single combat prior to the battle of Halidon Hill in Scotland in 1333. He was raised to the peerage as Lord Benhale in the year of his death in 1360.⁸

¹ This appendix does not include biographies of every individual Norfolk man mentioned in this thesis. Only those gentry who feature regularly in this study in a military capacity are included.

² *CP*, i, p. 417.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 418.

⁴ E.g. *CPR*, 1354-8, p. 227; *CPR*, 1358-61, p. 415; *Foedera*, iii, p. 120; *CP*, i, p. 418.

⁵ E.g. *CPR*, 1374-7, p. 138; *CP*, i, p. 419.

⁶ *CP*, i, pp. 419-20.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 420-1.

⁸ *Chronicon Galfridi Le Baker*, ed. Thompson, p. 51; *CP*, ii, pp. 115-16.

The Berneys' family fortune was founded by Sir Robert's father, John, who became steward of Edward the Black Prince's Norfolk estates and sat regularly on commissions and in county office in his native shire.⁹ Sir Robert (c. 1365-1415) was John's son by his second marriage, and, upon his father's death, the family inheritance was divided between the sons of John's first marriage (the Berneys of Reedham) and those of his second.¹⁰ Sir Robert's manor of Gunton bordered that of Sir Thomas Erpingham, and the two young men jointly carved out successful careers for themselves in Lancastrian service. Berney served under John of Gaunt in Scotland and Spain during the mid-1380s, and later became the steward of Gaunt's Norfolk manor of Gimingham.¹¹ By this stage, Berney was already becoming involved in county office, acting as J.P. for Norfolk from 1389, and knight of the shire in 1390, 1391, 1395 and 1399.¹² Berney may also have been in the service of Richard, earl of Arundel, who used him in several land transactions during the 1390s.¹³ At any rate, Berney appears to have successfully walked a middle-ground between his two close friends, the Lancastrian Erpingham and the Ricardian Sir Simon Felbrigg. He not only acted as Erpingham's attorney when the latter followed Henry of Bolingbroke into exile, but he performed the same function for Felbrigg prior to Felbrigg's participation on Richard II's Irish campaign in 1399.¹⁴ Berney's history of service to the house of Lancaster, and his friendship with Erpingham, brought him considerable favour and reward after Henry IV's accession to the throne. The king granted him an annuity of £20, which was later doubled by Henry V.¹⁵ Over the last fifteen years of his life, Berney held numerous offices in Norfolk and beyond. He was sheriff of the county twice and M.P. twice during these years, and acted as Erpingham's deputy as

⁹ *BPrege*, iv, p. 352; *CPR*, 1354-8, pp. 227, 338, 554; Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, pp. 43-4.

¹⁰ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, p. 208; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, iv, p. 38; viii, p. 306; xi, pp. 123-4; NRO, NCC Reg. Heydon, ff. 42-3; Reg. Harsyk, f. 114.

¹¹ *PCM*, i, pp. 474-6; TNA, DL 29/289/4744 m. 4; Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, p. 289.

¹² *CCR*, 1389-92, p. 342; Le Strange, *Official Lists*, p. 45.

¹³ E.g. *CCR*, 1396-9, p. 72; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, p. 209.

¹⁴ *CFR*, 1422-30, p. 130; *CPR*, 1396-9, pp. 554, 579.

¹⁵ TNA, DL 29/738/12096; DL 42/17, f. 26; Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 63.

warden of the Cinque Ports and constable of Dover Castle.¹⁶ Despite being well advanced in years, Berney agreed to serve on the Agincourt campaign in 1415, likely dying whilst still overseas in France.¹⁷

The Breweses

of Stinton

The Breweses originally hailed from the northwest and possessed family ties to the Welsh nobility.¹⁸ They had married their way into the East Anglian county elite during the thirteenth century.¹⁹ By the reign of Edward III, they had become a prominent family in the region. Sir John Brewes (1306-c.1370) had married Eva, sister of Robert Ufford, earl of Suffolk, and the Breweses and Uffords were evidently close, for Earl Robert mentioned in his will, dated 1368, his dear sister and his nephew, Sir John Brewes.²⁰ This nephew, Sir John Brewes II (1332-c.1394), undertook an extensive career in arms. He served as a minor at the siege of Calais in 1347, fought at the battle of Mauron in Brittany in 1352, participated on the French campaigns of 1372, 1373 and 1378, journeyed to Flanders on Bishop Despenser's crusade in 1383, accompanied John of Gaunt to Spain in 1386, and in 1387-8 served the earl of Arundel at sea.²¹ He was one of those East Anglian knights unfortunate enough to be captured by the rebels during the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.²² Five years earlier, Brewes had served as sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk, just as his grandson, Sir Thomas Brewes, would later do in 1438-9 and 1442-3.²³ Their family remained prominent in the Norfolk-Suffolk region until their extinction in the male line in 1489.²⁴

The Cliftons

of Buckenham

The Cliftons of Buckenham were well-established in Norfolk by the reign of Edward I and acquired much of their landed wealth through marriage to the prominent early

¹⁶ *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87; Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, pp. 45-6; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, p. 209.

¹⁷ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, p. 209.

¹⁸ *CP*, ii, p. 302.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

²⁰ *Testamenta Vetusta*, ed. Nicolas, i, pp. 73-4.

²¹ *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, ii, pp. 208-10; TNA, C76/55 m. 33; C76/56 m. 31; C76/62 m. 1; C76/67 m. 17; C76/71 m. 12; C76/72 m. 7.

²² *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, ed. Dobson, p. 258.

²³ *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87.

²⁴ *CP*, ii, p. 307.

fourteenth-century family, the Cailleys.²⁵ In 1376 Sir John Clifton (1353-1388) was raised to the peerage as Lord Clifton. He was succeeded as Lord Clifton by his sixteen year old son, Constantine, who died at the age of twenty-one. The latter's son, Sir John, was never summoned to parliament, but did establish himself as a prominent soldier under Henry V.²⁶ He probably served on the Agincourt expedition in 1415; he took part in the conquest of Normandy from 1417, held various garrison commands, and appears likely to have served regularly in France until the early-to-mid 1430s.²⁷ Sir John married Joan, heiress of Sir Edmund Thorpe II of Ashwellthorpe, which further enhanced his landholdings in Norfolk.²⁸ He died without male heir in 1447.²⁹

The Cursons

of Billingford and Bylaugh

The Cursons were a middling gentry family, holding land northwest of Norwich. They were tenants of the Lords Morley of Hingham and had a long connection with that family.³⁰ Hugh Curson, an active soldier during the 1340s, spoke on Thomas Lord Morley's behalf before the Court of Chivalry in 1386-7, and William Curson, a lawyer, had acted as a feoffee and executor of the will of William, third Lord Morley, in 1379.³¹ William's brother, Thomas, rose to become sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk.³² It was William's son, Sir John (d. 1415), however, who did the most to enhance his family's status, achieving an advantageous marriage with Mary Felton, daughter and co-heiress of Sir Thomas Felton of Litcham - a match likely arranged with the assistance of the Lords Morley, for Sir Thomas Morley was Mary Felton's brother-in-law.³³ Curson, it seems, pursued a military career, probably during the 1380s. By the 1390s, he had been appointed to determine appeals before the Court of Chivalry and the Court of the Admiralty, which implies that he possessed

²⁵ *The Rolls of Arms of Edward I*, ed. Brault, ii, p. 89.

²⁶ *CP*, iii, pp. 307-8; 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1880), Appendix i, p. 683; 'Norman Rolls' *DKR* (1881), Appendix, p. 380.

²⁷ TNA, E101/46/24 m. 3; E101/51/2 m. 13; Worcestre, *Itineraries*, p. 360; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1887), Appendix, pp. 237, 304; 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1881), Appendix, p. 417; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1883), Appendix, p. 627; TNA, C76/104 m. 13; C76/107 m. 3.

²⁸ *Reg. Chichele*, ii, pp. 143-9.

²⁹ *CP*, iii, pp. 307-8.

³⁰ *CIPM*, xiii, p. 328; *CPR*, 1370-4, p. 419.

³¹ TNA, C47/6/1, no. 99; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, p. 719.

³² *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87.

³³ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, p. 719; *CCR*, 1381-5, pp. 422, 596; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, p. 362; viii, p. 188; x, p. 336.

considerable military experience.³⁴ He was a J.P. in Norfolk from 1386 to 1388, and represented the county in parliament in 1393 and 1397. His second marriage, around 1399, to the Essex heiress, Beatrice, widow of Sir Ralph St. Leger, enabled him to settle in that county in his later years, where his lands were worth as much as £40 p.a.. Sir John died in 1415.³⁵ In that same year, his son, John jr, served in Sir Thomas Erpingham's retinue on the Agincourt campaign.³⁶

Sir Nicholas Dagworth

of Blickling

Sir Nicholas Dagworth (d. 1402) was probably the nephew of Edward III's famous captain in Brittany, Thomas Lord Dagworth, and it was as a soldier and diplomat that the younger Dagworth made his mark.³⁷ Sir Nicholas may have seen his formative years of military service under Lord Dagworth during the late 1340s. He certainly served under Edward the Black Prince in Gascony in 1355-7, and was again in France on the Rheims campaign of 1359-60.³⁸ During the truce years of the 1360s, Dagworth hired himself out as a mercenary across the Channel, becoming involved in the disputed succession to the throne of Castile in 1365, and was the commander of one of three English armies that participated in this feud.³⁹ By 1370, Dagworth was back in England as garrison commander at Norham castle in the north.⁴⁰ In 1373, Edward III granted him a life annuity of 100 marks.⁴¹ From this point on, Dagworth entered the second phase of his career as a respected royal diplomat. He treated with the Irish as Edward III's representative in 1375-6, and remained heavily involved in Irish affairs for the remainder of the decade. In 1381, he was sent to Rome to treat with Pope Urban VI, and also negotiated treaties of friendship with the King of Naples and King Wladislas in Germany. Dagworth was sent to Aquitaine in 1384 to see to the terms of the recently acquired truce between England and France. In 1385, he was

³⁴ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, p. 719.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ TNA, C76/98 m. 15.

³⁷ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, p. 733.

³⁸ CPR, 1345-8, p. 59; Hewitt, *The Black Prince's Expedition*, p. 201; TNA, C76/48 m. 3; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, pp. 733-4.

³⁹ Russell, *English Intervention in Spain and Portugal*, p. 39; Fowler, *Medieval Mercenaries I*, p. 326.

⁴⁰ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, p. 734.

⁴¹ CPR, 1370-4, p. 374.

sent once again to Rome and became the English ambassador at the Roman Curia.⁴² During these years he also became a chamber knight of Richard II.⁴³ Dagworth was among those singled out by the Lords Appellant during the crisis of 1387 and briefly arrested, although he was soon released to negotiate with the French for a final peace settlement.⁴⁴ His last diplomatic mission saw him sent to Scotland in 1389-90.⁴⁵ In his retirement during the 1390s, he was at times employed to determine appeals before the Court of Chivalry.⁴⁶ Dagworth unsurprisingly spent little time in East Anglia. He only held local office once, acting as M.P. for Norfolk in 1397, probably at Richard II's behest, since this was the parliament where Richard began his reprisals against the Lords Appellant, who had, after all, briefly imprisoned Dagworth a decade earlier.⁴⁷ Dagworth lived to see the usurpation of 1399, after which his annuity was confirmed by Henry IV.⁴⁸ He died in 1402 and was buried at his Norfolk manor of Blickling, where a brass tomb to his memory still remains.⁴⁹

Sir William Elmham of Fring (Norf.) and Westhorpe (Suff.)

Sir William Elmham (c.1336-1403), like Sir Nicholas Dagworth, carved out a fine career for himself as a soldier, simultaneously moving into the worlds of administration and international diplomacy. Elmham's early military career is obscure, but by the mid-1360s he had established himself as a captain of some renown, serving in the Free Companies during the truce years between England and France. Alongside Dagworth, he was one of three English knights to lead companies to Spain on their own account in 1365. Two years later, Elmham was back in Spain, this time serving under Edward the Black Prince. After the Prince's victory at Najéra, Elmham was sent as one of the Prince's envoys to treat with Prince Peter of Aragon.⁵⁰ From this point on, Elmham's career may best be described as a combination of military and diplomatic service. He served at sea under Guy Lord Bryan in 1371 and

⁴² *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, pp. 734-5.

⁴³ Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, p. 283.

⁴⁴ *CCR*, 1385-9, pp. 382, 394-5, 398.

⁴⁵ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, p. 735.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, p. 45; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, ii, p. 735.

⁴⁸ *CPR*, 1399-1401, p. 35.

⁴⁹ Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales*, ii, p. 85.

⁵⁰ CPR, 1364-7, p. 30; Russell, *English Intervention in Spain and Portugal*, p. 39; *Foedera*, iii, p. 779; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, pp. 13-14.

participated on John of Gaunt's French expedition in 1373.⁵¹ He was sent to Spain by Gaunt for further negotiations with the Aragonese, but was back in Aquitaine the following year, serving as captain and then governor of Bayonne, and as seneschal of Les Landes - which posts he held between 1374 and 1377. With his fellow Norfolk man, Sir Thomas Felton (the seneschal of Aquitaine), Elmham was appointed to treat for a truce with the King of Navarre in 1375.⁵² During these years, the Black Prince granted Elmham an annuity of £100, which was confirmed by Richard II upon his succession to the throne.⁵³ Like many old followers of the Black Prince, Elmham soon became a knight of Richard's household. He was one of the lucky survivors of John Lord Arundel's disastrous Brittany expedition of 1379, during which a significant portion of the fleet sank en route to France, with many drowned.⁵⁴ During the early 1380s Elmham turned his hand to local administration in East Anglia, sitting on commissions of array and oyer and terminer, and being charged to investigate various individual allegations of local misconduct, including playing an important role in suppressing the Peasants' Revolt in the region.⁵⁵ In 1383 Elmham agreed to organise the crusade to Flanders devised by his friend, Bishop Henry Despenser of Norwich, for which he recruited numerous East Anglian knights, as well as some of his old wartime comrades from far-flung counties.⁵⁶ Two years later, Elmham was serving at sea under Thomas Percy, admiral of the north fleet, and in 1387 he enlisted in the naval force led by the earl of Arundel that saw action off Margate. During the invasion scare of 1386, Elmham was assigned seventy-five men, with instructions to guard Great Yarmouth from attack.⁵⁷ Elmham was arrested by the Lords Appellant in 1388, but was soon released, and spent the early 1390s on diplomatic business across the Channel.⁵⁸ In 1394 he returned to England to serve on Richard II's Irish

⁵¹ *CPR, 1370-4*, p. 89; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 14.

⁵² Russell, *English Intervention in Spain and Portugal*, pp. 209-10, 216, 218-19, 565-6; TNA, E403/456 m. 21; TNA, E403/457 m. 20; TNA, C61/88 m. 7; *Foedera*, iii (3), pp. 27, 53.

⁵³ *CPR, 1377-81*, p. 355.

⁵⁴ Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, p. 284; Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. Riley, i, pp. 418, 425-6.

⁵⁵ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 14.

⁵⁶ Magee, 'Sir William Elmham', 181-90; Magee, 'Politics, Society and the Crusade, 1378-1400', Appendix i, pp. 231-2.

⁵⁷ TNA, E101/40/33 m. 11; E403/510 m. 9; *CCR, 1385-9*, p. 169.

⁵⁸ Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. Riley, ii, pp. 172-3; *CCR, 1385-9*, pp. 382, 394; *CPR, 1388-92*, p. 41.

expedition, but was soon sent to France and Spain on further diplomatic business, and after that to Scotland.⁵⁹ In 1399 he became one of the few Norfolk knights to openly declare his loyalty to Richard II and raised a small force of six men-at-arms and thirty archers on the king's behalf.⁶⁰ He was not punished by the new Lancastrian regime, but had his annuity confirmed by Henry IV and was made a 'king's knight'.⁶¹ Over the course of his successful career, Elmham made two excellent marriages, first to Anne, the daughter of his old wartime comrade, the Essex knight, Sir Robert Marney, and then to Elizabeth, daughter of his fellow Norfolk soldier, Sir Hugh Hastings II. He died in 1403.⁶²

Sir Thomas Erpingham

of Erpingham

Sir Thomas Erpingham (c. 1355-1428) hailed from a knightly family from Norfolk's northeast. He had seen military service in France as early as 1368, was knighted by 1372, and served again in France under William Ufford, earl of Suffolk, in 1373. In 1380 Erpingham was formally retained by John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, at a fee of £20 p.a. in peace and 50 marks in war. Erpingham served Gaunt in Scotland in 1385 and in Spain from 1386.⁶³ Around 1390 he transferred into the household of Gaunt's son, Henry of Bolingbroke, becoming one of his loyalist followers, and accompanying Bolingbroke on the latter's Prussian crusades in 1390-2, and into exile in 1398.⁶⁴ When Bolingbroke seized the throne in 1399, Erpingham was well rewarded for his loyalty. He was granted an annuity of 100 marks from the new king, and additionally held a seat on the royal council, and was presented with numerous gifts, grants and offices.⁶⁵ The latter included appointments as steward and chamberlain of the royal household, warden of the Cinque Ports and constable of Dover Castle.⁶⁶ In 1401 he was elected as a member of the Order of the Garter, and by

⁵⁹ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 16.

⁶⁰ 'Annales Ricardi Secundi et Henrici Quarti', ed. Riley, p. 246.

⁶¹ *CPR, 1399-1401*, pp. 39, 59, 206; Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, p. 288.

⁶² *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 13; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, p. 438; x, p. 305; *Norfolk Feet of Fines*, ed. Rye, pp. 289-90; *CPR, 1374-7*, p. 296.

⁶³ Walker, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', *ODNB*, xviii, p. 512; *JGReg (1379-83)*, p. 338; TNA, DL 42/15 f. 22; *CCR, 1381-5*, p. 557; TNA, C81/1036 (32); *PCM*, i, pp. 439-42; TNA, C76/70 m. 11.

⁶⁴ Castor, *The King, The Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 64-5; *PCM*, i, pp. 439-42.

⁶⁵ *CPR, 1401-5*, p. 47; Walker, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', *ODNB*, xviii, pp. 512-13.

⁶⁶ *CPR, 1408-13*, p. 57.

1409 he was in receipt of a life annuity of £100 from the future Henry V.⁶⁷ Upon the latter's accession, Erpingham was confirmed in his old post as steward of the royal household, and went on to serve King Henry on the Agincourt campaign in 1415.⁶⁸ Throughout the early Lancastrian period, Erpingham was additionally the most important knight in his native Norfolk, and in conjunction with Henry IV's half-brother, Thomas Beaufort, he acted as the effective leader of Norfolk county society.⁶⁹ Around 1417 he retired home to his native shire and died there, still active in local affairs, in 1428.⁷⁰

Sir John Fastolf

of Caister

Sir John Fastolf (1380-1459) hailed from a prominent Yarmouth merchant family. It was as a soldier, however, that he made his mark. Fastolf served under Thomas of Lancaster (later duke of Clarence) in Ireland during the early years of Lancastrian rule. In 1412-13 he followed Clarence to Aquitaine and was appointed deputy constable of Bordeaux and captain of Soubise and Veyres.⁷¹ Fastolf participated on Henry V's French expedition in 1415, fought at Agincourt and was at Harfleur the following year under Thomas Beaufort, duke of Exeter.⁷² When the invasion of Normandy was launched in 1417, Fastolf became an active participant, serving for the next four years under Clarence and Exeter. During this time Fastolf held the captaincies of Harfleur and Fécamp, and was made captain of the Bastille de St Antoine in Paris. Throughout the 1420s Fastolf continued to serve in France, acting as lieutenant of Normandy.⁷³ He was promoted to the rank of knight-banneret after distinguishing himself at the battle of Verneuil in 1424, and was elected as a Knight of the Garter in 1426.⁷⁴ Fastolf then served in Maine and was named governor of Les Mans. In 1429, his star fell briefly, after he was accused of cowardice at the battle of

⁶⁷ Walker, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', *ODNB*, xviii, pp. 512-13. The annuity from Prince Henry was compensation for having relinquished the constablership of Dover Castle.

⁶⁸ *CPR, 1413-16*, p. 120; TNA, E101/44/30 no. 3 m. 3; C76/98 m. 11.

⁶⁹ See Chapters Two and Three.

⁷⁰ Walker, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', *ODNB*, xviii, p. 513; *Chichele Reg*, ii, pp. 378-81.

⁷¹ Harriss, 'Sir John Fastolf', *ODNB*, xix, p. 134.

⁷² TNA, E101/44/30 no. 2 m. 7; E101/47/39 m. 1.

⁷³ 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1880), Appendix i, p. 747; 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1881), Appendix, p. 407.

⁷⁴ Oxford: Magdalen College, *FP* 69, m. 4; Worcester, *Itineraries*, pp. 335, 353.

Patay. He was soon back in favour, however, and continued to hold captaincies throughout the English *pays* during the 1430s, also becoming governor of the duke of Bedford's household. Fastolf retired in 1439, just as the war with France was starting to turn decisively against the English.⁷⁵ His years in the saddle had made him among the wealthiest knights in England, and throughout the 1430s he had purchased properties in numerous counties, especially in his native East Anglia, with an eye towards his retirement. He already held substantial estates in northern England as a result of his marriage in 1409 to Millicent, daughter of Robert Lord Tiptoft and widow of Sir Stephen Scrope.⁷⁶ Fastolf lived mainly in London for most of his later years, but built himself a magnificent castle at Caister, near his native Yarmouth, where he finally moved in 1454. The last twenty years of his life were difficult ones, as is clear from the Paston Letters. Fastolf became mired in litigation over his various landed estates, unsuccessfully took on the coterie of William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk, and lost his vast French possessions during the English expulsion. He died in 1459, and was unfortunate enough to become the loose basis for William Shakespeare's comic buffoon, Sir John Falstaff, whose cowardice in no way did the real Sir John Fastolf any justice whatsoever.⁷⁷

Sir Simon Felbrigg

of Felbrigg

Sir Simon Felbrigg (c. 1368-1442) hailed from a well-established knightly family from Norfolk's northeast. His maternal grandfather was Roger Lord Scales, and his father, Sir Roger Felbrigg, had been active in the king's wars during the 1350s and 1360s.⁷⁸ Felbrigg was a neighbour and close friend of Sir Thomas Erpingham, and, like many young Norfolk knights and esquires living in the vicinity of John of Gaunt's estates, Felbrigg soon found a place for himself in Gaunt's military retinue, serving at Brest and then in Spain.⁷⁹ It was in the royal service of Richard II, however, that Felbrigg made his mark. By 1393 King Richard had awarded Sir Simon 50 marks p.a. from the fee farm of Norwich. The next year Sir Simon was referred to as a

⁷⁵ Harriss, 'Sir John Fastolf', *ODNB*, xix, pp. 134-5.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*; Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 144-55.

⁷⁸ *CChR, 1341-1417*, pp. 130, 140; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, viii, pp. 108-9; *CPR, 1354-8*, p. 67; *CPR, 1367-70*, p. 18; *BPrege*, iv, p. 445.

⁷⁹ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 67; *PCM*, i, pp. 443-4.

‘king’s knight’.⁸⁰ In that same year he served King Richard in Ireland, and in 1395 was appointed to the prestigious position of royal standard-bearer, for which he received an annual fee of £100.⁸¹ In 1397 Felbrigg was elected to the Order of the Garter, and his place at court additionally enabled him to acquire the hand in marriage of Margaret, cousin and lady-in-waiting of King Richard’s Bohemian queen, Anne.⁸² Felbrigg continued to enjoy the bounty of Richard’s good graces, receiving an array of gifts and grants, most notably in an East Anglian context, being named keeper and constable of Framlingham Castle in June 1399, at an annual fee of £40. Felbrigg also served Richard in Ireland for a second time in that year.⁸³ The Lancastrian usurpation might have appeared a calamity for a man with as many Ricardian connections as Felbrigg. Yet he weathered the storm, in no small part due to his friendship with Sir Thomas Erpingham and other Norfolk-born Lancastrians of their generation. The fact that Felbrigg had acted as one of Erpingham’s feoffees when the latter had followed Henry of Bolingbroke into exile in 1398 attests to a friendship that crossed the bounds of lordly service.⁸⁴ Although Felbrigg lost most of his exceptional grants and offices after the Revolution, his friendship with Erpingham and others in their circle kept him at the forefront of Norfolk society and by 1407 he was again active in the county on commissions of the peace.⁸⁵ Felbrigg continued to serve the Lancastrian regime diligently for the rest of his days, fighting in Scotland in 1400, on the Agincourt campaign in 1415 and becoming a key member of Erpingham’s governing clique.⁸⁶ He was one of the longest-lived members of that circle, dying in 1442. His Ricardian loyalties are made clear in his will, composed in 1440, in which he left masses to be said for King Richard’s soul, but made no mention of any of the Lancastrian kings.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ *CPR, 1391-6*, pp. 227, 339, 717.

⁸¹ Milner, ‘Sir Simon Felbrigg KG’, 85; *CPR, 1391-6*, pp. 473, 476, 563, 601; *CCR, 1392-6*, p. 454.

⁸² Milner, ‘Sir Simon Felbrigg KG’, 85-6; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, viii, p. 109.

⁸³ Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, pp. 165, 201-2, 283; *CPR, 1396-9*, pp. 554, 579.

⁸⁴ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, p. 67. See also Chapter Three.

⁸⁵ *CPR, 1405-8*, p. 494.

⁸⁶ TNA, E101/41/1 m. 38; E101/45/3 m. 1.

⁸⁷ NRO, (Ketton-Cremer) WKC1/336/1a.

The Feltons

of Litcham

The Feltons were already an established Norfolk knightly family during the thirteenth century. Sir Robert Felton (d. 1314) served the first two Edwards over many years as a soldier and garrison commander in France and Scotland, rewarded for his efforts in 1313 by being raised to the peerage as Lord Felton. The following year he was killed at the battle of Bannockburn.⁸⁸ The Feltons though continued their rise under Edward III. Sir Hamo Felton (d. 1379), Robert's eldest surviving grandson, carved out a fine career for himself in war and administration during these years, acting, among other offices, as commissioner of array and knight of the shire, and marrying the widow of Sir William Kerdiston II.⁸⁹ Even more successful was Sir Hamo's younger brother, Sir Thomas Felton (d. 1381). Sir Thomas became an annuitant and close companion of Edward the Black Prince, fighting in his retinue at the battles of Poitiers (1356) and Najera (1367), becoming chamberlain of Chester in the Prince's stronghold in the northwest, and later spending the 1370s as seneschal of Aquitaine, defending it against the French.⁹⁰ These years, however, marked the high point of the Feltons' good fortune. Sir Hamo died without male issue in 1379, and Sir Thomas, after being captured and ransomed by the French, passed away - also without a male heir - in 1381, leaving the Feltons' estates to be divided up among heiresses. Of some consolation, Sir Thomas was elected to the Order of the Garter in the year of his death, and was duly installed, although he had already died before the preparations were complete.⁹¹

Sir Thomas Gerbergh

of Marlingford

The background of Sir Thomas Gerbergh (c. 1342-c. 1413) is obscure, but he was probably the nephew of a namesake who died in 1374.⁹² It appears that he acquired most of his lands in Norfolk and Suffolk through his profitable second and third marriages. His second wife was Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Robert Wachesham, through which Gerbergh obtained Wortham in Suffolk and Marlingford in Norfolk.

⁸⁸ *CP*, v, pp. 289-90.

⁸⁹ *CPR*, 1364-7, p. 365; Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, p. 44; *CP*, v, p. 292.

⁹⁰ Green, 'The Military Personnel of Edward the Black Prince', 152; Green, 'Edward the Black Prince and East Anglia', p. 88; Morgan, 'Sir Thomas Felton', *ODNB*, xix, pp. 286-7.

⁹¹ *CP*, v, pp. 292-3; Morgan, 'Sir Thomas Felton', *ODNB*, xix, pp. 286-7.

⁹² *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 179.

His third wife was Cecily, granddaughter of Sir Hamo Felton of Litcham and widow of Sir Thomas Geney of Brandiston.⁹³ Gerbergh meanwhile was already developing his reputation as a soldier and administrator. He began his military career in Spain in 1367 and followed this up with service in France in 1370 and 1373. Over the coming years he made his name in the military retinue of Thomas, fourth Lord Morley, on whose behalf he testified before the Court of Chivalry in 1386-7.⁹⁴ Gerbergh served under Morley's banner on the earl of Buckingham's Brittany expedition in 1380 and in Scotland in 1385, and likely participated on Bishop Despenser's crusade to Flanders in 1383.⁹⁵ He may have served at some point in the military retinue of Edmund of Langley, duke of York, for in 1388 he was officially retained by York to serve as his steward, at a fee of 40 marks p.a., with *bouche de court*.⁹⁶ Gerbergh was to serve as a councilor and steward of York's estates until shortly before his lord's death in 1402. Around this time York rewarded Gerbergh with an annuity of £20, charged on Anstey castle in Hertfordshire. Gerbergh too was named as an executor of York's will and had his annuity confirmed by the Crown in 1405.⁹⁷ The final years of Gerbergh's life were far less successful, as he became mired in debt and chased by his creditors.⁹⁸ He sat on occasional commissions in Norfolk and acted as M.P. for the shire in 1381, 1382 and 1386.⁹⁹ He died in 1413. Gerbergh's granddaughter, Agnes, married Judge William Paston.¹⁰⁰

Oliver Groos

of Sloley

Oliver Groos (c. 1372-1448) was the longest-lived of Sir Thomas Erpingham's governing circle. He was the descendant of an established knightly family that had settled at Sloley in Norfolk's northeast by the early thirteenth century and, although he never accepted the burdens of knighthood, he remained a prominent member of

⁹³ *CCR, 1381-5*, p. 437; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, ii, pp. 456-7; vii, p. 196; *CP*, v, p. 293; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, pp. 178-9.

⁹⁴ TNA, C47/6/1, no. 40; *PCM*, i, p. 496; TNA, C76/56 m. 21; C76/64 m. 1.

⁹⁵ TNA, C47/6/1 no. 40; C76/67 m. 16.

⁹⁶ TNA, C66/373 m. 25; *Testamenta Vetusta*, ed. Nicolas, i, pp. 150-1; *CPR, 1405-8*, p. 12.

⁹⁷ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, pp. 179-80; *Testamenta Vetusta*, ed. Nicolas, i, pp. 150-1.

⁹⁸ *CPR, 1405-8*, pp. 165, 436; *CPR, 1408-13*, pp. 19, 194; *CCR, 1402-5*, p. 133.

⁹⁹ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 178; Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, pp. 44-5.

¹⁰⁰ *PL*, ed. Davis, i, pp. xliii, liii.

Norfolk's county elite. Groos married Joan, daughter of his neighbour, Sir John White, and, like his father-in-law, he became active in the Lancastrian affinity of John of Gaunt.¹⁰¹ He fought under Gaunt's banner in Castile in 1386 and in Aquitaine in 1395, and was granted an annuity of £10 in the latter year, which was subsequently doubled by Henry IV, probably in recognition of Groos' good service on the Scottish expedition in 1400.¹⁰² Groos was also strongly connected with the affinity of Michael, second de la Pole earl of Suffolk. He had presided over courts at Bacton in Suffolk on the earl's behalf, and in 1415 he served in the earl's retinue on the Agincourt campaign.¹⁰³ Groos was appointed to a wide array of commissions in Norfolk and Suffolk (especially after the usurpation of 1399), and acted in Norfolk once as M.P., once as escheator, and three times as sheriff.¹⁰⁴

Sir Stephen Hales

of Testerton

Sir Stephen Hales (c. 1331-c. 1394) was one of Norfolk's most successful career soldiers of the Edwardian age. He first saw action in the sea-battle off Winchelsea in 1350. Between 1355 and 1357, he served under Edward the Black Prince in Gascony, participating at the battle of Poitiers. He undertook the Rheims campaign of 1359-60, and later followed the Prince to Spain, fighting at the battle of Najera in 1367.¹⁰⁵ Hales was obviously held in high regard by his princely employer, for in 1372 he was rewarded with a life annuity of 100 marks.¹⁰⁶ He undertook one further military expedition, journeying to Scotland under Richard II in 1385.¹⁰⁷ Like many of the Black Prince's old followers, Hales became a knight of the young King Richard's household.¹⁰⁸ Throughout the 1370s and 1380s, Hales immersed himself in East Anglian administration, sitting on numerous commissions in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. He acted as sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1378-9, and represented Norfolk in parliament no fewer than nine times between 1377 and

¹⁰¹ Rye, *Norfolk Families*, p. 333; Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, p. 186.

¹⁰² TNA, DL29/738/12096 m. 9; C76/70 m. 17; NRO, NRS 3344 m. 2; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 251.

¹⁰³ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 251; TNA, E101/46/24 m. 3.

¹⁰⁴ Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, p. 46; *List of Escheators*, p. 87; *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87.

¹⁰⁵ *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, i, p. 163; ii, pp. 369-70.

¹⁰⁶ *CPR, 1377-81*, p. 413.

¹⁰⁷ *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, i, p. 163; ii, pp. 369-70.

¹⁰⁸ Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, p. 285.

1386.¹⁰⁹ In 1381 he was one of those Norfolk knights captured by the rebels during the Peasants' Revolt.¹¹⁰

Sir Robert Harling

of East-Harling

Sir Robert Harling hailed from an established knightly family from southern Norfolk. His grandfather, Sir John I, had been active in Edward III's wars during the mid-fourteenth century, receiving custody of the sea-water at Bristol at the king's pleasure. Sir Robert's father, Sir John II, became the first husband of Cecily Mortimer of Attleborough, who would later take as her second husband, Sir John Radcliffe.¹¹¹ Sir Robert (d. 1435) distinguished himself during the Lancastrian phase of the wars with France. He participated in the conquest of Normandy and was at the siege of Meaux in 1422, and, like his uncle, Sir John Fastolf, he remained in France after Henry V's death, holding such prestigious offices as lieutenant of Alencon, and captain of Essay, Fresnay, Meulan and St. Germain. He was killed at Paris in 1435, defending its walls against the French. He left no male heir and his daughter, Anne, married the Suffolk Garter Knight, Sir William Chamberlain, one of her father's wartime comrades.¹¹²

The Hastings

of Elsing

The Hastings of Elsing were a cadet branch of the Hastings earls of Pembroke. The family also held land in the north of England, but made their home in Norfolk. For three generations they carved out impressive military careers in Lancastrian service.¹¹³ Sir Hugh Hastings I (d. 1347) served regularly in the military retinue of Henry of Grosmont, earl (later duke) of Lancaster, and his status was such that his memorial brass at St. Mary's Church at Elsing featured seven highly militarily-active peers, and King Edward III himself, as mourners.¹¹⁴ His son, Sir Hugh II (d. 1369), followed in his father's footsteps. Having purportedly first been armed against the

¹⁰⁹ E.g. *CPR, 1385-9*, p. 82; *CCR, 1389-92*, p. 135; *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87; Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, pp. 44-5.

¹¹⁰ *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, ed. Dobson, p. 258.

¹¹¹ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, pp. 319-21.

¹¹² TNA, E101/47/39 m. 1; E101/52/2 m. 6; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1883), Appendix, p. 626; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1887), Appendix, pp. 245, 264; TNA, C76/111 m. 3; Curry, 'The Soldier in Later Medieval England', [<http://www.inmacentre.ac.uk/soldier/database>].

¹¹³ Jack, 'Entail and Descent', 1-19; Keen, 'Grey v. Hastings', pp. 167-85.

¹¹⁴ Dennison and Rogers, 'The Elsing Brass and Its East Anglian Connections', pp. 167-93.

Saracens, he fought across the Channel under Henry of Grosmont in the 1350s and then, after Grosmont's death, became one of the first Norfolk knights to make an indenture with John of Gaunt, the new duke of Lancaster, becoming one of Gaunt's leading bannerets and an integral member of his military retinue.¹¹⁵ His son, Sir Hugh III (d. 1388), continued the family's proud martial traditions, crusading in the eastern Mediterranean and fighting in France, Scotland and Spain. He was one of Gaunt's captains on his Spanish venture in 1386, apparently distinguishing himself during the fighting at Brest on the way there. He died in Spain as a result of the disease that swept through the ranks of Gaunt's army.¹¹⁶ Sir Edward Hastings (d. 1438) was Sir Hugh III's second son, and succeeded his older brother, Sir Hugh IV, in 1396. Sir Edward served as a minor on Henry IV's Scottish expedition in 1400, but soon became embroiled in a protracted Court of Chivalry dispute with his kinsman, Reginald Lord Grey of Ruthin. Grey challenged the Hastings' right to their armorial bearings, and the dispute was intimately enmeshed with the aspirations of both Grey and Hastings to pass themselves off as the true heir to the recently-extinct Hastings earls of Pembroke. Despite hauling out a host of his father's and grandfather's old war comrades to speak on his behalf, Sir Edward nonetheless lost the case, fell into debt, and spent many long years in prison, railing against those who he believed had dishonoured his family name. The Hastings of Elsing never recovered from their failed Court of Chivalry dispute.¹¹⁷

The Howards

of Wiggenghale and East Winch

The Howards were an established family at East Winch, near Bishop's Lynn, by the reign of Edward I. Sir William Howard (d. 1308) made the family's fortune through the law, rising to become Chief Justice of the Common Pleas in 1297. His son, Sir John Howard I (d. 1333), was a Gentleman of the Bedchamber of Edward I, fought in Scotland in the reign of Edward II, and was appointed sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk. Sir John Howard II (d. c. 1388) further enhanced his family's growing reputation. He was one of those knightly companions of the young Edward III who assisted in the

¹¹⁵ *PCM*, i, p. 533; *TNA*, C76/34 m. 14; C76/38 m. 16; *NRO*, MR 314 (22) 242 x 5, as cited in Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 294-5; *TNA*, C61/79 m. 3; C76/52 m. 10.

¹¹⁶ *PCM*, i, *passim*.

¹¹⁷ Young, *Reginald Lord Grey and Sir Edward Hastings*, pp. 27-8, 32-4; Jack, 'Entail and Descent', 1-19; Keen, 'Grey v. Hastings', pp. 169-76.

overthrow of Queen Isabella and Roger Mortimer, and by 1335 he had been made a knight-banneret and was acting as admiral of the north fleet. Once the wars with France began, Howard developed a reputation as one of the leading naval commanders of his day, and personally led several attacks upon the French coast. His son, Sir Robert, who predeceased his father, further improved the family's lot by acquiring the hand in marriage of Margaret, daughter of Robert, third Lord Scales. Sir John II was succeeded by his grandson, Sir John III (d. 1437), who - like his father - married well. His first wife was Margaret, heiress of Sir John Plays, which brought the Howards estates in Cambridgeshire, Essex and Herfordshire, while the landed wealth of his second wife, Alice, heiress of Sir William Tendring, allowed the Howards to switch their principal place of residence from East Winch to Stoke-by-Nayland in Suffolk. Sir John III, like his grandfather, acted as admiral of the north fleet upon the resumption of the war with France in 1415. Sir John III's son, Sir John IV, predeceased his father and left only a daughter, Elizabeth, who married John de Vere, twelfth earl of Oxford, with the result that East Winch and the Howards' estates from the Scales and Plays marriages were lost to the de Veres. Sir John IV's younger brother, Sir Robert Howard (b. c. 1385), became a distinguished soldier under Henry V, serving on the Agincourt campaign and, like his ancestors, becoming a noted naval commander. In 1420 he married Lady Margaret Mowbray, daughter of Thomas, first Mowbray duke of Norfolk. Through this match, and the collapse of the Mowbray line in 1476, Sir John Howard V (later Lord Howard) (b. c. 1422) eventually became the first Howard duke of Norfolk in 1483, having already risen to great heights in his own right as a courtier and soldier under Edward IV.¹¹⁸

Sir Henry Inglose

of Lodden

Sir Henry Inglose (d. 1451) was a successful soldier and administrator, hailing from a knightly family long established at Lodden. Inglose carved out a notable career for himself in the king's wars, participating on the duke of Clarence's expedition in 1412-13, in the conquest of Normandy from 1417, and serving in France, with a couple of

¹¹⁸ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, pp. 236-47; J. M. Robinson, *The Dukes of Norfolk: A Quincentennial History* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 1-9.

breaks, for most of the 1420s.¹¹⁹ He was captured in 1425-6 alongside his East Anglian comrade, Sir John Knyvett, but nonetheless acquired a respected reputation in the world of chivalry.¹²⁰ His close friend and long-time military companion, Sir John Fastolf, arranged for Inglose to act as his proxy at his installation as a Garter Knight in 1426.¹²¹ When not overseas Inglose took an active interest in the politics of his native Norfolk, acting as M.P. for the shire in 1425 and 1429. After his retirement from France, probably in the early 1430s, he continued to participate on local commissions and to represent Norfolk as M.P., holding the office again in 1432, 1435, 1436-7 and 1448-9.¹²² He remained close to Fastolf and the latter's circle of friends, despite accommodating himself to the political circumstances of the 1430s and 1440s much better than did his cantankerous old comrade. He died in 1451.¹²³

Sir John Ingoldesthorpe

of Ingoldesthorpe and Raynham

The Ingoldesthorpes were an established Norfolk knightly family by the reign of Edward I. Sir John Ingoldesthorpe (c. 1361-1420) was only two years old when his father died. He was knighted in 1383 and served the earl of Arundel at sea four years later.¹²⁴ In 1396 he was retained by Thomas Mowbray, earl of Nottingham, receiving a fee of £20 p.a. charged on the manor of Willington in Bedfordshire.¹²⁵ His mother had arranged an excellent match for him with Elizabeth, daughter of the wealthy Cambridgeshire knight, Sir John Burgh. Burgh died without male issue and Ingoldesthorpe thus found his landed wealth considerably enhanced.¹²⁶ He was heavily involved in local office in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, acting as sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1402-3, M.P. for Suffolk in 1404, M.P. for Norfolk in 1414, and escheator of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1414-15, while additionally sitting on various other commissions in all three counties.¹²⁷ In his final years,

¹¹⁹ William Worcestre, *Itineraries*, p. 360; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR*, xlv (1883), p. 605; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1887), Appendix, pp. 221, 244; TNA, C76/95 m. 8; C76/101 m. 9; C76/106 m. 20; C76/109 m. 18.

¹²⁰ William Worcestre, *Itineraries*, p. 358.

¹²¹ *Register of the Garter*, printed by Barber, ii, p. 132.

¹²² Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, pp. 46-7.

¹²³ *PL*, ed. Davis, i, p. 252.

¹²⁴ *CCR*, 1381-5, p. 343; TNA, E101/40/33 m. 11.

¹²⁵ *CPR*, 1399-1401, p. 193.

¹²⁶ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, pp. 475-6.

¹²⁷ *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87; Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, pp. 45-6; *List of Escheators*, p. 86; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 475.

Ingoldesthorpe appears to have resided in Cambridgeshire, where he served as a J.P.. He made his will in that county in 1419 and it was there at Burrough Green that he wished to be buried.¹²⁸

The Kerdistons

of Repham and Claxton

The Kerdistons had long been a prominent Norfolk knightly family. Sir William Kerdiston I had been sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1296-7.¹²⁹ It was, however, his son, Judge Roger Kerdiston (d. 1337), who brought the family to new heights, attaining the rank of Justice of the King's Bench and being raised to the peerage as Lord Kerdiston.¹³⁰ Roger's son, Sir William Kerdiston II (1307-1361), acted occasionally as a commissioner in his native Norfolk, but really made his mark as a soldier, serving in France, fighting at the battle of Crécy in 1346, and becoming a banneret of the household of Edward the Black Prince.¹³¹ Kerdiston seemingly retired from military service after the Crécy-Calais campaign of 1346-7, but continued to hold administrative posts in Norfolk until his death. Sir William's son, William III (possibly illegitimate), became an active administrator in the county, acting as sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1374 and 1381.¹³² His son, Sir Leonard Kerdiston, pursued a military career like his grandfather, purportedly first taking up arms in Scotland in 1385 at the age of nine, before seeing action in Spain.¹³³

Sir John Knyvett

of Mendlesham (Suff.)

The Knyvetts hailed originally from Northamptonshire. It was Judge John Knyvett (d. 1381) who made the family's fortune, becoming Chief Justice of the King's Bench and Chancellor of England.¹³⁴ His son, John II (c. 1358-1418), made a profitable marriage with Joan, daughter and heiress of Sir John Boutetourt of Mendlesham in Suffolk, which marriage introduced the Knyvetts to the East Anglian scene. John II was active in county office, among other duties acting as sheriff and escheator of

¹²⁸ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 476.

¹²⁹ *Lists of Sheriffs*, p. 86.

¹³⁰ *CP*, vii, pp. 191-3.

¹³¹ *CPR, 1348-50*, p. 526; *Rymer's Foedera 1066-1377*, ed. Hardy, i, p. 324; Wrotesley, *Crécy and Calais*, pp. 193-204; *BPReg*, i, p. 80; Green, 'Edward the Black Prince and East Anglia', p. 88.

¹³² *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87.

¹³³ TNA, C47/6/1, no. 64; *PCM*, i, pp. 456-7.

¹³⁴ E. Foss, *The Judges of England* (London, 1848-64), iii, pp. 451-3.

Norfolk and Suffolk.¹³⁵ His son, Sir John III (c. 1393-1445), carved out a long, but rather ill-fated, career for himself as a soldier in the Lancastrian wars in France. He served on the Normandy campaigns from 1417 and was knighted by 1421, but soon afterwards was captured alongside his Norfolk companion-in-arms, Sir Henry Inglose, which might explain some of Knyvett's later financial difficulties. Knyvett probably continued to serve in France after his release, but was captured a second time at Calais in 1436, with his ransom set at £1,000. Given the sum, he was unsurprisingly still a prisoner two years later.¹³⁶ For all of his ill-fortune as a soldier, and despite the fact he largely chose to reside and hold public office in Northamptonshire, it was nonetheless Sir John III who enabled his family to establish their foothold at the forefront of Norfolk society, through his lucrative marriage to Elizabeth, sister and heiress of Sir John Clifton of Buckenham. Knyvett did not live to see the fruits of this union, dying in 1445, two years before his brother-in-law.¹³⁷

John Lancaster II

of Bressingham

The Lancasters were a lesser gentry family from southern Norfolk, near the Suffolk border, but John Lancaster II (d. 1424) became a prominent figure in the region through his long years of loyal service to the house of Mowbray, from whom he held land at Boyland.¹³⁸ Lancaster saw his formative years of military service under the earl of Oxford in Scotland in 1385 and under Sir Henry Percy at the garrison of Berwick-upon-Tweed. He was retained by Thomas Mowbray, earl of Nottingham, in 1389, and the following year was appointed chamberlain of Berwick at an annual fee of £40, at which time Mowbray was acting as warden of the east march towards Scotland. When Mowbray was appointed captain of Calais in 1392, Lancaster was made captain of nearby Marck Castle.¹³⁹ By the time of Mowbray's exile in 1398, Lancaster had been rewarded for his services with the life tenancy of Diseworth manor in Leicestershire, which was worth as much as £36 p. a., as well as an annual rent of 20 marks charged on the Mowbray manor of Willington in Bedfordshire.

¹³⁵ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, vi, p. 170; CCR, 1374-7, pp. 509-11; Virgoe, 'The Earlier Knyvetts', 4.

¹³⁶ Worcestre, *Itineraries*, pp. 358, 360; CPR, 1436-41, p. 177.

¹³⁷ Virgoe, 'The Earlier Knyvetts', 4-6.

¹³⁸ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, pp. 12, 59, 128.

¹³⁹ *Rot. Scot.*, ed. Macpherson *et. al.*, ii, pp. 99, 103; TNA, E101/41/17; CPR, 1391-6, p. 318; CPR, 1396-9, p. 381; TNA, E68/11/273; E69/1/277; C76/76 m. 12; C76/77 m. 11.

Lancaster was one of eight men appointed to the council that oversaw Mowbray's affairs during his exile.¹⁴⁰ During the early years of Henry IV's reign, Lancaster acted as one of the chief councilors of Mowbray's eponymous son and heir, Earl Thomas, during which time he also acted as keeper of the Mowbray's castle at Framlingham (Suff.).¹⁴¹ After the young Earl Thomas was executed for his part in the Scrope rebellion of 1405, Lancaster nonetheless continued his service to the house of Mowbray under Thomas' younger brother, Earl John. The remainder of Lancaster's life was taken up extensively with participation in local office in Norfolk and Suffolk. He served as sheriff in 1415-16, 1416-17 and 1423-24. He was M.P. for Norfolk in 1419, twice in 1421, and in 1422, and was similarly elected to represent Suffolk in 1407, 1410, 1411 and 1413. He was additionally a J.P. for Norfolk between 1416 and 1423, and escheator of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1418-19. He died in 1424.¹⁴²

Sir Thomas Morieux

of Thorpe Morieux (Suff.)

Although hailing from Suffolk, Sir Thomas Morieux developed into a man of considerable influence throughout East Anglia as a result of long years of service as a soldier and local administrator. Early in his career, he became a retainer of the last Bohun earl of Hereford,¹⁴³ and, from the late 1370s, was a chamber knight of Richard II.¹⁴⁴ Morieux was also strongly connected with the Lancastrian affinity and acquired the hand in marriage of John of Gaunt's bastard daughter, Blanche.¹⁴⁵ He served regularly in Gaunt's military retinue during the 1380s and was marshal of Gaunt's army on the Castilian expeditions of 1386-8, and it was in Spain that he lost his life.¹⁴⁶ He twice sat as an M.P. for Norfolk, was sheriff once, and may have acted as the escheator of Norfolk and Suffolk as well.¹⁴⁷ His niece married Sir John Strange of Hunstanton, who inherited Thorpe Morieux after Sir Thomas' death.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁰ *CPR, 1396-9*, p. 422; *CPR, 1399-1401*, pp. 294-5; *CFR, 1399-1405*, pp. 208-9, 212-13.

¹⁴¹ *CFR, 1399-1405*, pp. 208-9, 212-13; *CPR, 1405-8*, p. 86.

¹⁴² *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87; Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, p. 46; *List of Escheators*, p. 87; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, pp. 548-9.

¹⁴³ Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, p. 104, n. 137.

¹⁴⁴ Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, p. 283.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 50 n., 203, 275.

¹⁴⁷ Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, pp. 43-4; *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87; *List of Escheators*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁸ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, pp. 500-1.

The Lords Morley

of Morley, Hingham and Reydon

The Morleys were already well-established at the forefront of Norfolk society by the beginning of the fourteenth century. Robert, second Lord Morley (c. 1295-1360), was a minor at the time of his father's death in 1302. He married (c. 1316) Hawise, daughter of his guardian, William Marshal, Lord Marshal of Hingham.¹⁴⁹ Morley's first known military expedition was the Scottish campaign of 1315. In 1317 he was summoned to parliament for the first time.¹⁵⁰ Over the course of a long career in war and administration, Morley acted as keeper of the coast and admiral of the north fleet, sat on judicial commissions and was a regular peace commissioner in Norfolk.¹⁵¹ He participated on the Scottish expedition of 1333, seeing action at the battle of Halidon Hill, and served again in Scotland during the winter of 1334-5. Once the war with France began, Morley raided the Normandy coast in the summer of 1339; played a leading role at the naval battle of Sluys in 1340; served in Brittany in 1342; was again in France (1345-7), participating at the battle of Crécy and the siege of Calais; fought in the sea battle of Winchelsea in 1350; and died on the Rheims campaign in 1360.¹⁵² Lord Robert's son and heir, William, third Lord Morley (1319-79), had been knighted by 1354 and in that year served in Gascony under Robert Ufford, earl of Suffolk, and took part in the Black Prince's expedition to Carcassonne and Narbonne in 1355. His military service was limited after 1360, but he acted regularly as a peace commissioner in Norfolk. He most famously was one of those Norfolk knights captured by the peasant rebels during the revolt of 1381.¹⁵³ Lord William's son, Thomas, fourth Lord Morley (c. 1354-1416), sat on numerous commissions in Norfolk from the 1380s onwards, and was entrusted with the protection of Yarmouth during the invasion scare of 1386.¹⁵⁴ Lord Thomas was also an extremely active soldier, campaigning in Brittany in 1375, participating in the siege of St. Malo in

¹⁴⁹ *CFR*, 1307-19, p. 308.

¹⁵⁰ *CP*, ix, p. 211.

¹⁵¹ E.g. *CPR*, 1348-50, p. 526; *CPR*, 1354-8, pp. 60-1; Ayton, 'Robert, second Lord Morley', *ODNB*, xxxix, pp. 236-7.

¹⁵² Morley's military career may be gleaned from the depositions given in favour of his family before the Court of Chivalry in 1386-7. TNA, C47/6/1; see also, Ayton, 'Robert, second Lord Morley', *ODNB*, xxxix, pp. 236-7; *CP*, ix, pp. 212-14.

¹⁵³ *CP*, ix, pp. 214-15; *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, ed. Dobson, p. 258.

¹⁵⁴ *CPR*, 1385-9, p. 135.

1378, fighting under the earl of Buckingham in 1380, and additionally serving in Scotland, Spain and Ireland over the ensuing two decades. He later was appointed as a commissioner of array and sat on the regency council of the duke of Bedford during the Agincourt expedition in 1415.¹⁵⁵ In 1386-7 he had successfully defended his family's arms before the Court of Chivalry against the challenge of his kinsman, Lord Lovel.¹⁵⁶ Thomas, fourth Lord Morley, was succeeded by his grandson, Thomas, fifth Lord Morley (c. 1393-1435). The latter was an active participant in Henry V's conquest of Normandy, participating at the sieges of Rouen, Melun and Meaux between 1418 and 1422, and serving in France again in 1429-30.¹⁵⁷ Lord Thomas's son and heir, Robert, sixth Lord Morley, died without male issue in 1442, after which the barony passed to the Lovels - the Morleys' earlier opponents in their dispute before the Court of Chivalry.¹⁵⁸

The Noons

of Tilney and Shelfhanger

The Noons had been resident at Tilney, west of Bishop's Lynn, since at least the mid-thirteenth century. Edmund Noon (d. 1413) came into his inheritance in 1375 and considerably enhanced his family's landholdings by marriage to the widow of Sir John Verdon, through which Noon obtained several manors in Suffolk and southeast Norfolk, including Shelfhanger.¹⁵⁹ Noon had probably carved out a profitable career for himself as a soldier in Edward the Black Prince's service, for in 1371 the Prince granted him a lifetime annuity of £20 p.a.. He was an esquire of Prince Edward's chamber by this stage and in 1374 his annuity was increased by ten marks. Richard II confirmed Noon's annuity and other grants made to him by the Black Prince, and brought him into his service as an esquire of the royal household.¹⁶⁰ Noon was knighted some time during the 1380s and remained much in favour throughout Richard's reign, undertaking diplomatic missions on the king's behalf and participating on Richard's Irish expeditions in 1394 and 1399. After the usurpation Henry IV brought Noon into his own household as a 'king's knight' and confirmed

¹⁵⁵ *PCM*, i, pp. 435-9; *CPR*, 1396-9, p. 525; *CP*, ix, p. 217.

¹⁵⁶ *TNA*, C47/6/1.

¹⁵⁷ 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1883), Appendix, p. 604; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1887), Appendix, p. 274; *TNA*, C76/101 m. 11; C76/104 m. 18; C76/112 m. 12.

¹⁵⁸ *CP*, ix, p. 219.

¹⁵⁹ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, ix, p. 74; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, pp. 841-2.

¹⁶⁰ *CPR*, 1377-81, pp. 199, 285, 373; Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, p. 285.

his annuity.¹⁶¹ The regard in which Noon was held by this late stage of his career is clear from the fact that he was assigned to the entourage of Henry's second son, Thomas (later duke of Clarence), and became an integral member of the young prince's household in Ireland. Noon died in 1413.¹⁶² His son, Henry (d. 1422), had already entered Clarence's favour by the time of his father's death. Henry Noon served Clarence in Ireland in 1408 and on the Agincourt campaign in 1415. He undertook the invasion of Normandy in 1417 and attained favour with Henry V, receiving seisin of the castle and lordship of Condé-sur-Noireau in Normandy. When he died in 1422 he was currently holding the office of master of the king's horse.¹⁶³

Sir John Norwich

Sir John Norwich (c. 1299-1362) was the son and heir of Walter Norwich, Chief Baron of the Exchequer under Edward II. Norwich was an active administrator in his native Norfolk, who also acted as admiral of the coast from the Thames northwards.¹⁶⁴ As a knight-banneret he was a regular participant in Edward III's Scottish and French wars in the 1330s and 1340s. He served in Scotland in 1322 and again in the winter of 1334-5. In 1337 he led an expeditionary force to Gascony and there became the lieutenant of the duchy, second-in-command to another Norfolk knight, Oliver Lord Ingham, who held the post of seneschal. Norwich served on the expedition of 1345 as one of Henry of Grosmont's leading bannerets and continued on to see action during the Crécy-Calais expedition of 1346-7, retiring from the military sphere thereafter.¹⁶⁵ Norwich nonetheless maintained an active interest in Norfolk administration, acting as a peace commissioner, a commissioner of array, and a protector of the coast during the 1350s. He was summoned to parliament in 1360 as

¹⁶¹ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, pp. 842-3; *CPR, 1399-1401*, pp. 93, 510; Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, p. 289.

¹⁶² *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 843.

¹⁶³ Curry, *Agincourt: A New History*, p. 284; 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1880), Appendix i, pp. 695, 792; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 843.

¹⁶⁴ Verduyn, 'John Norwich, first Lord Norwich', *ODNB*, xli, pp. 199-200; *CPR*, 1334-8, p. 56.

¹⁶⁵ *CPR, 1321-4*, p. 184; *Rot. Scot.*, ed. Macpherson *et. al.*, i, p. 286; *Foedera*, ii, p. 1023; Wrotesley, *Crécy and Calais*, pp. 6, 31.

Lord Norwich and died two years later. His eponymous grandson died in 1373, bringing the family's direct male line to an end.¹⁶⁶

Sir William Oldhall

of East Dereham

Sir William Oldhall was the son of a successful Lancastrian administrator. His father, Edmund, had participated under Sir Hugh Hastings III's banner on Gaunt's Spanish venture in 1386, before becoming receiver of the estates of the duchy of Lancaster in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, and serving on numerous commissions in East Anglia, as well as acting twice as sheriff, three times as escheator, and five times as M.P. for Norfolk.¹⁶⁷ Sir William, while still an esquire, indented to serve in the military retinue of Thomas Beaufort prior to the Agincourt campaign, and was with Beaufort again at Harfleur the following year. Oldhall was an active participant in the conquest of Normandy from 1417, and it was in the English *pays* that he made his name. He was knighted at the battle of Cravant in 1423, was probably at the battle of Verneuil the next year, and participated in the Anjou and Maine campaigns between 1424 and 1428.¹⁶⁸ By the former date he was acting as seneschal of Normandy, and went on to hold a host of captaincies in the duchy, at Essay, Fresnay, and Alencon.¹⁶⁹ In 1429 he was nominated for membership of the Order of the Garter, but lost out to the Lancashire-born resident of Norfolk, Sir John Radcliffe.¹⁷⁰ By 1436 Oldhall was a member of the royal council in Normandy and was acting as lieutenant of Bayeaux in 1438-9.¹⁷¹ No doubt built on the back of his rapidly acquired military reputation, Oldhall had been able to make a fine marriage for himself, acquiring the hand of Margaret, daughter of William Lord Willoughby of Eresby. This match brought Oldhall extensive lands in the West Riding of Yorkshire and in Lincolnshire, which

¹⁶⁶ Verduyn, 'John Norwich, first Lord Norwich', *ODNB*, xli, pp. 199-200; *CP*, ix, pp. 765-6.

¹⁶⁷ TNA, C76/70 m. 8; Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, i, pp. 377, 596; *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87; Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, pp. 45-6; *List of Escheators*, p. 86; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, pp. 870-1.

¹⁶⁸ Curry, 'Sir William Oldhall', *ODNB*, xli, p. 686; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1883), Appendix, p. 627; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1887), Appendix, pp. 225, 230; Worcestre, *Itineraries*, pp. 3-5; *Wars of the English in France*, ed. Stevenson, ii, ii, p. 385.

¹⁶⁹ Curry, 'The Soldier in later Medieval England', [<http://www.inmacentre.ac.uk/soldier/database>].

¹⁷⁰ Roskell, 'Sir William Oldhall', 94.

¹⁷¹ Curry, 'Sir William Oldhall', *ODNB*, xli, p. 686.

he buttressed with the purchase of estates in Hertfordshire.¹⁷² While he was aggrandizing himself at home, Oldhall's military career continued unabated. From 1441 he became increasingly associated with Richard, duke of York, the lieutenant-general of France, becoming one of the duke's closest advisors, and being appointed as his chamberlain in 1444-5. Oldhall probably ended his years of service outside England by accompanying York to Ireland in 1449.¹⁷³ The last decade of his life proved tumultuous, as his fortunes ebbed and flowed alongside York's during the early stages of the Wars of the Roses. Oldhall was appointed speaker of the House of Commons in 1450, representing Hertfordshire, but spent the next few years under indictment for treason, in the wake of his support for York. Throughout the decade he was reliant upon continued Yorkist success. He died in London in 1460.¹⁷⁴

Sir William Phelip of Dennington (Suff.) and Wormegay (Norf.)

Sir William Phelip (c. 1380-1441) hailed from Dennington in Suffolk. His father, a well-established knight, had become a prominent retainer of William Ufford, earl of Suffolk, acting as the latter's bailiff at Framlingham castle. Sir William Phelip, on his mother's side, was the nephew of Sir Thomas Erpingham and it was undoubtedly through this connection that he was able to establish a flourishing career in royal service after 1399.¹⁷⁵ Phelip was made a 'king's esquire' by Henry IV and shared in an annuity of £40. He received numerous gifts, grants and offices from the king, most notably a fee of £20 p.a. charged on the issues of the duchy of Lancaster in Norfolk; a gift of £17 in silver confiscated from the Percys' adherents after their revolt; and appointment as constable of Norwich castle for life, at an annual fee of £20.¹⁷⁶ Most prestigiously of all, Phelip was granted the hand of Joan, daughter and co-heiress of the traitor, Thomas Lord Bardolf, which eventually would see him raised to the peerage as Lord Bardolf.¹⁷⁷ Phelip's younger brother, John, in the meantime, had achieved just as much, becoming a close companion of the future Henry V. Both brothers were knighted upon Henry's accession to the throne, and both served on the

¹⁷² Roskell, 'Sir William Oldhall', 90; Curry, 'Sir William Oldhall', p. 686.

¹⁷³ Roskell, 'Sir William Oldhall', 96-8; Curry, 'Sir William Oldhall', p. 686; *CPR*, 1446-52, p. 233.

¹⁷⁴ Roskell, 'Sir William Oldhall', 99-111; Curry, 'Sir William Oldhall', p. 286.

¹⁷⁵ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 71.

¹⁷⁶ *CPR*, 1399-1401, p. 179. For some of Phelip's rewards during these years, see for example, *CPR*, 1401-5, pp. 35, 89, 95, 184, 255, 493; *CPR*, 1408-13, p. 416.

¹⁷⁷ *CP*, i, pp. 420-1.

Agincourt campaign, on which Sir John lost his life.¹⁷⁸ Sir William subsequently undertook the invasion of Normandy from 1417, and his prowess as a soldier was such that he was elected to the Order of the Garter in 1418.¹⁷⁹ He was appointed captain of Harfleur in 1421 and became treasurer of the royal household, and the following year was placed in charge of the funeral arrangements after Henry V's death.¹⁸⁰ Phelip remained in royal favour throughout the 1420s and towards the end of the decade succeeded to a large portion of the estates of both his uncle, Erpingham, and Thomas Beaufort.¹⁸¹ From 1432 Phelip was chamberlain of the royal household and a member of the royal council. In 1437, when the young Henry VI officially began to rule in his own right, Phelip was retained on the king's council and was finally granted the honour of Wormegay, which, despite his earlier marriage to the Bardolf heiress, had originally been granted by Henry IV to his half-brother, Thomas Beaufort. It was in that year, 1437, that Phelip was personally summoned to parliament as Lord Bardolf.¹⁸² Throughout these years too, Phelip continued to play an active role in regional affairs, acting as chief steward of the duchy of Lancaster lands in the south, and named as a J.P. and M.P. for Suffolk, while also sitting on numerous other commissions throughout East Anglia. He died in 1441.¹⁸³

The Playses of Feltwell and Tofte (Norf.) and Chelsworth (Suff.)

By the accession of Edward III, the Playses were long established in East Anglia - their ancestor, Sir Giles Plays, having been raised to the peerage in 1297.¹⁸⁴ Two generations of Playses, father and son, carved out fine military careers for themselves during Edward's reign. Sir Richard Plays (d. 1360) became a military companion of Edward the Black Prince, serving at Crécy in 1346 and Poitiers in 1356, receiving a gift of 250 marks from the Prince for his good service in the latter engagement, and

¹⁷⁸ Curry, *Agincourt: A New History*, p. 285; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 70.

¹⁷⁹ 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1880), Appendix i, pp. 696, 775; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1883), Appendix, pp. 606, 612, 631; Collins, *Order of the Garter*, p. 298.

¹⁸⁰ 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1881), Appendix, p. 415; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, pp. 72-3.

¹⁸¹ Castor, *The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster*, pp. 80-1.

¹⁸² *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 71; *CP*, i, pp. 420-1.

¹⁸³ Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, i, pp. 202-3; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 71.

¹⁸⁴ *CP*, x, pp. 535-9.

dying on, or shortly after, the Rheims campaign of 1359-60.¹⁸⁵ His son and heir, Sir John Plays (d. 1389), attained his majority three years after his father's death, and soon became one of the first Norfolk knights to attach himself to John of Gaunt's military retinue, eventually receiving a highest peacetime fee of £40.¹⁸⁶ He served under Gaunt's banner across the Channel in 1367, 1369, 1370, 1372, 1373 and 1378.¹⁸⁷ Plays' lands and interests were widespread, and he acted as a commissioner in Essex, as well as Norfolk and Suffolk.¹⁸⁸ He married firstly, Sir John Norwich's granddaughter, Margaret, and secondly, Sir Miles Stapelton's daughter, Joan. Plays died without male issue in 1389.¹⁸⁹

Sir John Radcliffe

of Attleborough

Sir John Radcliffe (d. 1441) hailed from Lancashire and made his name as a soldier in Lancastrian service. As a young man, he became attached to the entourage of Henry IV's second son, Thomas of Lancaster (later duke of Clarence), serving the latter in Ireland, and in 1404 receiving a life annuity of £10 from the king.¹⁹⁰ Probably in the following year, Radcliffe obtained the hand of Cecily, co-heiress of the wealthy Norfolk knight, Sir Thomas Mortimer, which marriage gained Radcliffe entrée into Norfolk society and allowed him to set himself up at the Mortimers' traditional seat of Attleborough.¹⁹¹ It was in these years too that Radcliffe began his life-long association with Sir John Fastolf, who was Cecily Mortimer's half-brother, and with whom Radcliffe had already served in Ireland.¹⁹² Henry V recognised Radcliffe's value as a soldier and retained him in 1413 with life annuities collectively worth more than £40 p.a.. Radcliffe likely served under Clarence in France in 1412-13.¹⁹³ He was certainly an active participant on the Agincourt expedition and was one of Thomas Beaufort's lieutenants at Harfleur the following year.¹⁹⁴ The conquest of Normandy in

¹⁸⁵ Wrotesley, *Crécy and Calais*, pp. 90, 168-9, 189; *BPrege*, iv, pp. 289, 388; TNA, C76/38 m. 11.

¹⁸⁶ Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity*, pp. 186-7; *CPR*, 1367-70, p. 406.

¹⁸⁷ TNA, C81/912 (40); C81/925 (55); C61/83 m. 3; C76/55 m. 21; C76/56 m. 20; C81/985 (64).

¹⁸⁸ *CPR*, 1377-81, p. 6; *CPR*, 1381-5, pp. 139, 143-4, 246, 257; *CPR*, 1385-9, p. 256.

¹⁸⁹ *CP*, x, pp. 541-2.

¹⁹⁰ *CPR*, 1401-5, p. 393; TNA, DL 42/16, f. 27d.

¹⁹¹ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, i, pp. 511-15.

¹⁹² *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, pp. 155-6.

¹⁹³ TNA, DL 42/17, f. 26d; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 156.

¹⁹⁴ Curry, *Agincourt: A New History*, p. 281; TNA, E101/47/39 m. 1.

1417 opened up a new and final phase to Radcliffe's already successful military career. He was appointed bailiff of Evreux in 1418, and constable of Bordeaux and captain of Fronsac the following year.¹⁹⁵ In 1423 the minority council promoted Radcliffe to the post of seneschal of Aquitaine. This prestigious office, however, carried considerable burdens, not least the fact that the royal government was slow in meeting their payments, both for the maintenance of the duchy and to Radcliffe personally. Consequently Radcliffe's visits to Aquitaine became increasingly rare. From 1425 too, he was distracted by litigation surrounding his second marriage to Katherine, co-heiress of Hugh Lord Burnell. This match promised him several Norfolk manors, and potentially a vast landed stake in Shropshire, but a series of entails hampered his efforts to acquire these properties.¹⁹⁶ In 1426 Radcliffe had been nominated to the Order of the Garter, but had lost out to his friend, Fastolf. In 1429, however, he was duly elected to the Order.¹⁹⁷ In the final years of his life, Radcliffe continued seeking redress for arrears due to him from his offices in France. At the same time, he began to carve out a new career for himself as an international diplomat, appointed as one of the ambassadors to the Congress of Arras in 1435, and not long after sent to treat with the Prussians and the Hanse towns. In 1436 he was recalled to the field one last time, receiving praise from contemporary chroniclers for his relief of the garrison at Calais. Radcliffe died in 1441 and was buried at Attleborough, still purportedly owed over £7,000 by the Crown. His descendants became prominent East Anglian gentry, and his son adopted the title of Lord Fitzwalter by right of his wife, although he was never officially summoned to parliament.¹⁹⁸

William Rees

of Tharston

William Rees (d. 1410) hailed from a lesser gentry family that lived a few miles from Norwich. His mother, Margery Appleyard, was the daughter of prominent urban gentry from the county's capital. Rees was a tenant of John Lord Mowbray (d. 1368),

¹⁹⁵ 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1880), Appendix i, p. 713; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1883), Appendix, p. 634; 'Treaty Rolls', *DKR* (1887), Appendix, p. 249.

¹⁹⁶ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 157.

¹⁹⁷ Beltz, *Memorials of the Order of the Garter*, pp. lxiii-lxiv, clix.

¹⁹⁸ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, pp. 158-9; *CP*, v, pp. 484-6.

becoming a member of the latter's household in his youth.¹⁹⁹ In 1379 he was retained by Richard, earl of Arundel, as his esquire in peace and war, receiving his fee from the manor of Househam in Essex, worth between 20 marks and £20 p.a.. Rees went on to serve Arundel at sea in 1387.²⁰⁰ Despite this connection, the Mowbrays remained Rees' principal lords. He served in Thomas Mowbray's retinue in France in 1388 and provided securities at the Exchequer on Mowbray's behalf. Rees was appointed as one of Mowbray's attorneys when his lord traveled to Ireland with Richard II in 1394. Three years later Mowbray rewarded Rees with an annuity of £10.²⁰¹ After the usurpation, during the minority of Earl Thomas' sons, Rees acted as a custodian of the Mowbrays' estates, being named joint keeper of the manor of Forncett. Rees may also have been retained by Thomas Lord Morley, for he acted on the latter's behalf in several transactions, including being one of his attorneys when Morley traveled to Prussia in 1391.²⁰² Within East Anglia, Rees sat on numerous commissions. He acted as a J.P. in Norfolk and Suffolk, was M.P. for Norfolk in 1390, 1394 and 1397, was escheator of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1406-7, and was appointed sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk three times, and of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire once. Rees died in 1410.²⁰³

John Reymes

of Overstrand

John Reymes (c. 1367-1411) was the heir of a middling knightly family from Overstrand, near Cromer, who made his career in Lancastrian service.²⁰⁴ Reymes served under Sir Hugh Hastings III in Scotland in 1385 and Castile in 1386, and later followed John of Gaunt to Aquitaine in 1395.²⁰⁵ Reymes was retained by Gaunt in 1392, receiving an annuity of £10.²⁰⁶ Throughout these years he was heavily involved

¹⁹⁹ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, v, p. 305; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iii, p. 187; *Early Lincoln Wills*, ed. Gibbons, p. 62.

²⁰⁰ TNA, C66/348 m. 29; E101/40/33 m. 1.

²⁰¹ TNA, E101/41/5 m. 3; *CPR, 1391-6*, p. 506; *CPR, 1396-9*, p. 255; *CFR, 1383-91*, pp. 57, 258; *CIM, 1392-9*, pp. 242, 387, 391; Archer, 'The Mowbrays', pp. 18-19.

²⁰² *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 188.

²⁰³ Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, p. 45; *List of Escheators*, p. 86; *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 187.

²⁰⁴ Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, viii, pp. 143-6; Raimes, 'Reymes of Overstrand', 26-7.

²⁰⁵ *PCM*, i, p. 444; TNA, DL 29/738/12096 m. 9; C81/1040 (24); Raimes, 'Reymes of Overstrand', 29.

²⁰⁶ NRO, (Norfolk Record Society) NRS 3344 m. 2.

with his fellow Lancastrian gentry in Norfolk, marrying into the lawyer family, the Winters of Town Barningham, and acting as one of Sir Thomas Erpingham's witnesses when the latter settled his estates upon feoffees prior to following Henry of Bolingbroke into exile.²⁰⁷ In 1399 Reymes took out a letter of protection to serve Richard II in Ireland, but appears unlikely to have made the journey, for he raised a small force to serve Bolingbroke when the latter invaded England. For his good service Reymes had his annuity confirmed by the new king, and was made a 'king's esquire'. In 1400 Reymes was granted a life annuity of £20, and two years later was appointed to the prestigious post of constable of Norwich Castle. In 1405 he received a pension of £30 p.a., charged on the duchy estates in East Anglia. Reymes acted as knight of the shire twice, in 1404 and 1406. He died in 1411.²⁰⁸

Sir Robert Salle

of Salle

Sir Robert Salle (d. 1381) was a rare example of a commoner raised into the ranks of the regional knightly elite. He was born the son of a peasant (possibly a serf) and began his career - probably as an archer or foot soldier - during the 1350s. Certainly after the Rheims campaign of 1359-60 he was in receipt of a royal pardon as reward for his military service.²⁰⁹ His career flourished in France during the 1360s and 1370s, during which time he was appointed as captain of Marck Castle at Calais. Salle, however, will be forever remembered not for his military achievements, but for his death at the hands of the peasant mob during the revolt of 1381, when he rode into their midst with sword in hand and was brought down and promptly lynched.²¹⁰

The Lords Scales

of Middleton

The Scales were one of Norfolk's three resident baronial families during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Robert, third Lord Scales (1311-1369), succeeded his father in 1325, receiving seisin of his lands in 1332.²¹¹ He acted on commissions in Norfolk and was regularly summoned to parliament. He was also an

²⁰⁷ *CCR*, 1396-9, p. 400; *CPR*, 1396-9, p. 524; *Foedera*, viii, p. 78.

²⁰⁸ Raimes, 'Reymes of Overstrand', 30-3; *House of Commons*, 1386-1421, iv, pp. 203-4.

²⁰⁹ *CPR*, 1358-61, p. 371.

²¹⁰ Goodman, *The Wars of the Roses: The Soldiers' Experience*, p. 82; *Chronicon Angliae*, ed. Thompson, pp. 172-3; *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, ed. Dobson, pp. 258-60.

²¹¹ *CCR*, 1330-3, p. 510.

active participant in the wars with France, serving the king across the Channel in 1337, at sea in 1340 (probably at the battle of Sluys), and fighting in the first division at the battle of Crécy in 1346.²¹² His son, Robert, fourth Lord Scales (c. 1347-1386), was a regular commissioner in East Anglia during the 1370s and 1380s. In 1381 he was one of the knights apprehended by the peasant mob in Norfolk and compelled to join them. He served on the French expedition of 1370, on Richard II's Scottish campaign in 1385, and died in Spain in 1386, presumably in the service of John of Gaunt. He spoke on behalf of the Scropes before the Court of Chivalry in the year of his death.²¹³ His son, Robert, fifth Lord Scales (c. 1374-1402), served on Richard II's ill-fated Irish campaign in 1399, and after the usurpation served in Aquitaine. His early death in 1402 engendered a minority crisis for his family. His eldest son, Robert (1396-1419), became the sixth Lord Scales at the age of six, and died childless in 1419.²¹⁴ Robert was succeeded by his younger brother, Thomas (1399-1460), who became an active captain in the English *pays*. He was at the siege of Moln-sur-Seine in 1421; was at Rouen with the duke of Bedford in 1424; fought at the battles of Beaugencé and Patay in 1429; laid siege to Mont St. Michel in 1434; and held such prestigious posts as captain of Domfront (1434-5 and 1449), captain of Vire (1435-6 and 1446), captain of Granville (1441-2), and seneschal of Normandy (1435-6 and 1446).²¹⁵ In 1440 he was granted an annuity of 100*l.* for his good service in France.²¹⁶ When at home in Norfolk, he was an active judicial commissioner, and played a key role in repelling the rebels in London during Jack Cade's revolt in 1450. He was a supporter of his old wartime comrade, William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk. As a committed Lancastrian, he was ultimately slain by pro-Yorkist Thames watermen in 1460.²¹⁷

²¹² *CPR*, 1334-8, pp. 527-8, 535; *CCR*, 1339-41, p. 513; Wroottesley, *Crécy and Calais*, p. 31.

²¹³ *CPR*, 1370-4, pp. 238, 305, 476; *CPR*, 1374-7, pp. 135, 138, 314; *CPR*, 1385-9, pp. 82, 168, 173; *CCR*, 1381-5, p. 557; *CCR*, 1385-9, p. 60; *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, ed. Dobson, p. 258; *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, ii, pp. 219-20.

²¹⁴ *CP*, xi, pp. 503-4.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 505.

²¹⁶ *CPR*, 1436-41, p. 425.

²¹⁷ *CP*, xi, p. 506.

The Sheltons

of Shelton and Great Snoring

The Sheltons were already an established knightly family in Norfolk by the reign of Edward I. Sir Ralph Shelton I (d. 1375) had connections with Edward the Black Prince and was a veteran of the battles of Crécy and Poitiers, although he was captured at the latter encounter.²¹⁸ His son, Sir Ralph II (d. 1414), became an active soldier in the 1370s and 1380s. He campaigned in France in 1369, agreed to participate there again in 1372, served at sea under the earl of Hereford in 1373, and subsequently became a long-term military follower of John of Gaunt, fighting for Gaunt in France, Scotland and Spain between 1378 and 1386. In 1383 he additionally participated on the bishop of Norwich's crusade to Flanders.²¹⁹ From the 1390s onwards, Sir Ralph II settled down in his native shire, sitting on commissions in Norfolk and acting as the county's M.P. in 1393 and 1402.²²⁰ The war service he had performed for John of Gaunt, and the friendships he had made in the latter's service with Sir Thomas Erpingham, Sir John Strange and John Winter, stood him in good stead after Henry of Bolingbroke seized the throne in 1399. Sir Ralph II died in 1414. In his will he had attempted to by-pass his son and heir, William, in favour of his grandson, John, resulting in protracted litigation after his death.²²¹

The Stapeltons

of Ingham

Sir Miles Stapelton (d. 1364) hailed from Bedale in Yorkshire. During the 1340s he carved out a flourishing career for himself in the French wars. He was probably at the siege of Tournai in 1340, and later in the decade campaigned in Brittany in 1342 and 1345, and was at the battle of Crécy in 1346 and the siege of Calais in 1347. For his efforts, Stapelton was chosen as a founding member of the Order of the Garter.²²² In 1350 or 1351, Stapelton married Joan, heiress of the Norfolk baron, Oliver Lord Ingham, establishing his descendants as one of the most prominent families in the north of the county.²²³ Stapelton served again in France in 1356 and on the Rheims

²¹⁸ *CPR*, 1345-8, p. 481; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 356.

²¹⁹ *PCM*, i, pp. 423-4; *TNA*, C76/62 m. 9; C76/56 m. 25; C76/70 m. 20; C76/67 m. 16.

²²⁰ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 356; Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, p. 45.

²²¹ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 356; Shenton, 'Sir Miles Stapleton of Bedale', *ODNB*, lii, pp. 280-1.

²²² Lee-Warner, 'The Stapletons of Ingham', 200.

²²³ *CP*, vii, pp. 61-2.

expedition of 1359-60. In June 1360 he was granted a life annuity of £100, specifically provided as reward for his good service in the king's wars.²²⁴ He died after the battle of Auray in 1364.²²⁵ For the next two generations, the Stapeltons continued to maintain themselves as leading gentry in both East Anglia and northern England. Sir Miles' grandson, Sir Brian (1379-1438), served as sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk, and also M.P. for Yorkshire. Like his grandfather, Sir Brian served in the wars in France from 1417, but was captured and endured five years of imprisonment.²²⁶ Sir Miles Stapelton had founded a priory at Ingham in the 1350s, and it was there that Sir Miles, his son and grandson were all buried.²²⁷

Sir John Strange

of Hunstanton

The Stranges of Hunstanton were a cadet branch of the Lords Strange of Knockin in Shropshire. Upon the death of Sir John Strange's (c. 1347-1417) father, Sir Hamo (d. 1361), Edward the Black Prince unsuccessfully claimed the young man's wardship by virtue of the family's tenancy of certain lands near the Prince's manor of Castle Rising. The connection with the Black Prince's affinity persisted, however, and the young John Strange saw his early years of military service in Guienne under the Prince's long-time military comrade, Sir Richard Walkefare, and it was undoubtedly through this connection that Strange became Walkefare's son-in-law. Joan Walkefare was also the niece of the Lancastrian soldier, Sir Thomas Morieux, through whom Strange was able to enhance his landholdings in Suffolk.²²⁸ It was probably also through his kinship tie with Morieux that Strange landed a position in John of Gaunt's affinity, retained as an esquire in 1373 to serve Gaunt in peace and war, receiving a wartime fee of 20 marks. Strange was knighted by 1378 and went on to serve Gaunt in Scotland and Spain during the 1380s.²²⁹ For the remainder of Richard II's reign Strange developed his connections with the house of Lancaster, with the earl of Arundel (serving as Norfolk's M.P. during both parliaments in 1388 at the height of the Appellant crisis), and with various prominent gentry families, including the

²²⁴ Shenton, 'Sir Miles Stapleton of Bedale', *ODNB*, lii, pp. 280-1; TNA, E101/393/11 f. 13v; *CPR*, 1358-61, p. 429.

²²⁵ *CP*, vii, pp. 62-3.

²²⁶ *List of Sheriffs*, p. 87; *CP*, vii, p. 63.

²²⁷ Lee-Warner, 'The Stapletons of Ingham', 204-18; *CP*, vii, pp. 63-4.

²²⁸ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, pp. 500-1.

²²⁹ *JGReg* (1372-76), no. 853; *JGReg* (1379-83), p. 8; TNA, C76/70 m. 11; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 501.

Uffords and Sir Thomas Erpingham.²³⁰ The Revolution of 1399 opened up new vistas for Strange, who soon became a 'king's knight' under Henry IV, chief usher of the king's hall from 1402, and controller of the royal household from 1405, while also receiving an array of gifts and grants throughout the reign.²³¹ At a local level, Strange acted on numerous commissions in Norfolk and Suffolk during these years. He was named J.P. in Norfolk from 1401, and acted as escheator three times, and M.P. for Suffolk twice. Strange died in 1417.²³²

The Thorpes

of Ashwellthorpe

The Thorpes were already a well-established Norfolk knightly family by the reign of Edward I. Sir Edmund Thorpe I (1319-1393) had served at Crécy in his youth and represented Norfolk as knight of the shire four times between 1371 and 1384.²³³ Sir Edmund's son, Sir Edmund Thorpe II (d. 1418), entered the service of Sir Thomas Percy, admiral of the north fleet, in the mid-1380s, serving with the latter at sea. Around 1388, Thorpe married Joan, widow of Roger, fourth Lord Scales, which provides a good indication of his status in Norfolk society.²³⁴ Probably through his connections with Sir Thomas Percy, Sir Edmund became a 'king's knight' of Richard II and in 1393 was formally retained with a life annuity of 50 marks.²³⁵ He served with King Richard in Ireland in 1399, and after the usurpation Henry IV magnanimously doubled Thorpe's annuity.²³⁶ Thorpe represented Norfolk twice as an M.P. in 1397 and 1407.²³⁷ In 1415, despite being well advanced in years, he participated on the Agincourt expedition and the siege of Harfleur that followed. The next year, Thorpe undertook the invasion of Normandy, dying at the siege of Louviers in 1418.²³⁸

²³⁰ Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, p. 45; see also Chapter Three.

²³¹ Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, p. 287; *CCR*, 1402-5, pp. 486, 510, 522.

²³² *List of Escheators*, p. 86; Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, p. 45; *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, pp. 500-2.

²³³ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 598; Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, p. 44.

²³⁴ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, p. 599.

²³⁵ *CPR*, 1391-6, p. 206; *CPR*, 1396-9, pp. 525, 529, 531; Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household*, p. 286.

²³⁶ *CPR*, 1399-1401, pp. 129, 143.

²³⁷ Le Strange, *Norfolk Official Lists*, p. 45.

²³⁸ *CPR*, 1413-16, p. 157; TNA, E101/51/2; 'Norman Rolls', *DKR* (1880), Appendix i, pp. 683, 711.

Sir John White

of Lammas and Shotesham

Sir John White (d. 1407) hailed from a middling gentry family that held land in northeast Norfolk and in northern Suffolk. White raised himself into the East Anglian elite through long years of service to the Lancastrian affinity and as a county office holder. White was one of those young, northeast Norfolk gentry who joined John of Gaunt's military retinue during the 1380s, serving under the Lancastrian banner in Castile in 1386, and probably also in Scotland in 1385.²³⁹ White at the same time had become a valued duchy administrator. He had been bailiff of the manor of Gimingham since 1380 and feodary of Gaunt's estates in Norfolk since 1381.²⁴⁰ White did not exclusively serve duchy interests. He held land at Shotesham from Margaret of Brotherton, countess of Norfolk, and was sufficiently active in her service that he was named as one of the executors of her will in 1399. In county office White was a J.P. in Norfolk from 1381, a knight of the shire no fewer than seven times, and sat on numerous commissions, including those of the peace, array, and goal delivery. Through kinships ties and traditional service in war and peace to the duchy of Lancaster, White was naturally part of Sir Thomas Erpingham's governing clique after 1399, although his active participation in local government noticeably declined after the usurpation, as he shifted his interests to his second wife's dower lands in Suffolk. White died in 1407.²⁴¹

²³⁹ TNA, C47/6/1, no. 65; C81/1032 (27); *Scrope v. Grosvenor*, ii, pp. 196-7.

²⁴⁰ *JGReg (1379-83)*, i, p. 12, nos. 199, 618; ii, no. 831; Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, i, p. 378.

²⁴¹ *House of Commons, 1386-1421*, iv, pp. 829-31.

APPENDIX IIa

THE MORLEY CIRCLE: SAMPLE OF GENTRY CONNECTIONS WITH THE LORDS MORLEY OF HINGHAM

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Military Service</u> | <u>Admin. Service</u> | <u>Service in Affinity</u> | <u>Tenorial Association</u> | <u>Legal/Family Association</u> |
|-------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Bardolfs | Y | Y | N | N | Y |
| Berneys | Y | Y | N | Y | N |
| Breweases | Y | N? | N | N | Y |
| Cursons | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Feltons | Y | Y | N | N | Y |
| Geneys | Y | N | N | N | Y |
| Gerberghs | Y | Y | N | Y | Y |
| Grooses | Y | Y | N | Y | Y |
| Hastings' | Y | N | N | N | Y |
| Howards | Y | Y | N | N | Y? |
| Ingloses | Y | Y | N | N | Y |
| Kerdistons | Y | Y | N | Y | Y |
| Mortimers | Y? | Y | N | N | Y |
| Norwiches | Y | Y | N | N | Y |
| Playses | Y | Y | N | N | Y |
| de la Poles | Y | Y | N | N | Y |
| Scales' | Y | Y | N | N | Y |
| Stapeltons | Y | Y | N | N | Y? |
| Uffords | Y | Y | N | Y | Y |
| Verdons | Y | N? | Y | N | Y? |
| Whites | Y | Y | N | N | Y |

*Y= Yes, there existed a specific connection.

*N= No specific connection has been uncovered.

APPENDIX IIb

THE ERPINGHAM CIRCLE: SAMPLE OF THE GENTRY CONNECTIONS OF SIR THOMAS ERPINGHAM

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Military Service</u> | <u>Admin. Service</u> | <u>Service in Affinity</u> | <u>Governmental Service</u> | <u>Legal Association</u> |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Sir Robert Berney | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Sir John Brewes | Y | Y | N | N | N |
| Sir John Clifton | Y | Y | N | N | N |
| Sir John Curson | N | Y | N | N | Y |
| John Curson jr | Y | N | N | N | N |
| Thomas Derham | N | Y | N | N | Y |
| Sir Simon Felbrigg | Y | Y | N | N | Y |
| John Gournay | N | Y | N | N | Y |
| Oliver Groos | Y | Y | Y | N | Y |
| Sir Hugh Hastings III | Y | N | Y | N | N |
| Sir Leonard Kerdiston | Y | N | N | N | N |
| Sir Thomas Morieux | Y | N | Y | N | N |
| Thomas, 4th Lord Morley | Y | Y | N | N | Y |
| Henry Noon | Y | N | Y | Y | N |
| Edmund Oldhall | N | Y | Y | N | Y |
| Sir William Phelip | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Sir John Plays | Y | N | Y | N | N |
| William Rees | N | Y | N | N | N |
| John Reymes | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Sir Ralph Shelton II | Y | Y | N | N | N |
| Sir John Strange | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Sir Edmund Thorpe II | Y | Y | N | Y | N |
| Laurence Trussebut | N | Y | N | N | N |
| Sir John White | Y | Y | Y | N | Y |
| Edmund Winter | N | Y | N | N | Y |
| John Winter | N | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| John Wodehouse | N | Y | Y | Y | Y |

APPENDIX IIIa

NORFOLK'S WARRIOR GENTRY: ANNUITANTS

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Lord</u> | <u>Annuities</u> | <u>References</u> |
|-------------------------|--|--------------------------|--|
| Sir Robert Berney | John of Gaunt; Henry IV; Henry V | £20 (doubled by Henry V) | TNA, DL 29/738/12096; DL 42/17, f. 26; Castor, <i>The King, the Crown, And the Duchy of Lancaster</i> , p. 63. |
| Sir Nicholas Dagworth | Edward III | 100 Marks | <i>CPR, 1370-4</i> , p. 374; <i>CPR, 1399-1401</i> , p. 35. |
| Sir William Elmham | Edward the Black Prince | £100 | <i>CPR, 1377-81</i> , p. 355. |
| Sir Thomas Erpingham | John of Gaunt; Henry IV; Prince Henry (Henry V) | 100 Marks £100 | <i>CPR, 1401-5</i> , p. 47; Walker, 'Sir Thomas Erpingham', <i>ODNB</i> , xviii, pp. 512-13. |
| Sir Simon Felbrigg | Richard II | 50 Marks | <i>CPR, 1391-6</i> , p. 227. |
| Sir Thomas Felton | Edward the Black Prince | £40 | Green, 'The Military Personnel of Edward the Black Prince', 152. |
| Sir Thomas Gerbergh | Edmund of Langley, duke of York | £20 | <i>House of Commons, 1386-1421</i> , iii, pp. 179-80. |
| Oliver Groos | John of Gaunt; Henry IV; Henry V | £10 | NRO, NRS 3344 m. 2; <i>House of Commons, 1386-1421</i> , iii, p. 251. Walker, <i>The Lancastrian Affinity</i> , p. 270. |
| Sir Stephen Hales | Edward the Black Prince | 100 Marks | <i>CPR, 1377-81</i> , p. 413. |
| Sir Hugh Hastings II | John of Gaunt | £20 | Walker, <i>The Lancastrian Affinity</i> , p. 271. |
| Sir John Ingoldesthorpe | Thomas Mowbray, earl of Nottingham | £20 | <i>CPR, 1399-1401</i> , p. 193. |
| John Lancaster II | Thomas Mowbray, earl of Nottingham | 20 Marks | <i>CPR, 1396-9</i> , p. 422. |
| Sir Edmund Noon | Edward the Black Prince; Richard II | £20 | <i>CPR, 1377-81</i> , pp. 199, 285, 373. |
| Sir William Phelip | Henry IV; Henry V; Henry VI | £40 (shared); £20 | <i>House of Commons, 1386-1421</i> , iv, p. 71. |
| Sir John Plays | John of Gaunt | £40 | <i>CPR, 1367-70</i> , p. 406; Walker, <i>The Lancastrian Affinity</i> , p. 278. |
| Sir John Radcliffe | Henry IV Henry V | £10 £40 (+) | <i>CPR, 1401-5</i> , p. 393; TNA, DL42/16, f. 27d; TNA, DL 42/17, f. 26d. |
| William Rees | Thomas Mowbray, earl of Nottingham | £10 | <i>House of Commons, 1386-1421</i> , iv, p. 188. |
| John Reymes | John of Gaunt Henry IV | £10 £20-£30 | NRO, NRS 3344 m. 2; Raimes, 'Reymes of Overstrand', 30-3. |
| Sir Miles Stapelton | Edward III | £100 | <i>CPR, 1358-61</i> , p. 429. |
| Sir Edmund Thorpe II | Richard II Henry IV | 50 Marks 100 Marks | <i>CPR, 1391-6</i> , p. 206; <i>CPR, 1399-1401</i> , pp. 129, 143. |
| Sir John White | John of Gaunt/Henry IV | £20 | Walker, <i>The Lancastrian Affinity</i> , p. 284. |

APPENDIX IIIb

NORFOLK'S WARRIOR GENTRY: OFFICE HOLDERS IN MAGNATE/ROYAL SERVICE

| Name | Lord | Offices | References |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Sir Robert Berney | John of Gaunt Henry IV | steward of Gimingham king's knight deputy warden of the Cinque Ports deputy constable of Dover Castle | TNA, DL 29/289/4744 m. 4; Given-Wilson, <i>The Royal Household</i> , p. 288. <i>House of Commons, 1386-1421</i> , ii, p. 209. |
| Sir Nicholas Dagworth | Richard II | chamber knight | Given-Wilson, <i>The Royal Household</i> , p. 283. |
| Sir William Elmham | Richard II | king's knight | <i>Ibid.</i> , p. 284. |
| Sir Thomas Erpingham | Henry IV | chamberlain of the royal household steward of the royal household warden of the Cinque Ports constable of Dover Castle royal councillor | <i>Ibid.</i> , p. 287. <i>CPR, 1408-13</i> , p. 57; Castor, <i>The King, the Crown, and the Duchy of Lancaster</i> , p. 71. |
| Sir John Fastolf | John, duke of Bedford | governor of the household | Harriss, 'Sir John Fastolf', <i>ODNB</i> , xix, p. 134. |
| Sir Simon Felbrigg | Richard II | king's knight royal standard bearer | <i>CPR, 1391-6</i> , pp. 227, 339, 473, 476, 563, 601, 717; <i>CCR, 1392-6</i> , p. 54; |
| Sir Thomas Felton | Henry IV Edward the Black Prince | king's knight steward of the household chamberlain of Chester | Given-Wilson, <i>The Royal Household</i> , p. 288. Green, 'Edward the Black Prince and East Anglia', p. 88; Given-Wilson, <i>The Royal Household</i> , p. 284. |
| Sir Thomas Gerbergh | Richard II | king's knight | TNA, C66/373 m. 25; <i>CPR, 1405-8</i> , p. 12. |
| Sir Stephen Hales | Edmund of Langley, duke of York | steward of the household | Given-Wilson, <i>The Royal Household</i> , p. 285. |
| Sir Edward Hastings | Richard II | king's knight | <i>Ibid.</i> , p. 289. |
| Sir Hugh Hastings III | Richard II | king's knight | <i>Ibid.</i> , p. 285. |
| Sir John Howard | Richard II | king's knight | <i>Ibid.</i> |
| John Lancaster II | Mowbray earls of Nottingham | councillor keeper of Framlingham Castle | <i>CFR, 1399-1405</i> , pp. 208-9, 212-13; <i>CPR, 1405-8</i> , p. 86. |
| Sir Thomas Morieux | Richard II | chamber knight | Given-Wilson, <i>The Royal Household</i> , p. 283. |
| Sir Edmund Noon | Richard II | king's knight | <i>Ibid.</i> , p. 285. |
| Sir William Oldhall | Henry IV | king's knight | <i>Ibid.</i> , p. 289. |
| Sir William Phelip | Richard, duke of York | chamberlain of the household councillor | Roskell, 'Sir William Oldhall', 96-7. |
| Sir William Phelip | Henry IV | king's esquire | <i>CPR, 1399-1401</i> , p. 179; |
| | Henry V | treasurer of the royal household | <i>House of Commons, 1386-1421</i> , iv, pp. 71-3. |
| | Henry VI | chamberlain of the royal household royal councillor | |
| William Rees | Mowbray earls of Nottingham | keeper of Forncett | <i>House of Commons, 1386-1421</i> , iv, p. 188. |
| John Reymes | Henry IV | king's esquire | Raimes, 'Reymes of Overstrand', 30. |
| Sir John Strange | Henry IV | king's knight chief usher of the king's hall controller of the royal household | Given-Wilson, <i>The Royal Household</i> , p. 287; <i>CCR, 1402-5</i> , pp. 486, 510, 522. |
| Sir Edmund Thorpe II | Richard II | king's knight | Given-Wilson, <i>The Royal Household</i> , p. 286. |
| | Henry IV | king's knight | <i>Ibid.</i> , p. 290. |
| Sir John White | John of Gaunt | bailiff of Gimingham feodary of Gaunt's estates in Norfolk | <i>JGReg (1379-83)</i> , i, p. 12, nos. 199, 618; ii, no. 38. Somerville, <i>Duchy of Lancaster</i> , i, p. 378. |

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| C76 | Treaty Rolls |
| C81 | Chancery Warrants |
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| E210 | Ancient Deeds, Series D |
| E212 | Ancient Deeds, Series DS |
| E326 | Ancient Deeds, Series B |
| E403 | Exchequer of Receipt, Issue Rolls |
| SC8 | Special Collections, Ancient Petitions |

Norwich: Norwich Public Library

MS. 7197 William Worcester's 'Ancient Families of Norfolk' (Fragments)

Norwich: Norfolk Record Office

| | |
|------------|---|
| Le Strange | Le Strange MSS |
| NCC | Norwich Consistory Court, Register of Wills |
| NRS | Norfolk Record Society |
| Phi | Phillips |
| WKC | Ketton-Cremer |

Oxford: Magdalen College

Fastolf MSS

Guton Deeds

Hickling MSS

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